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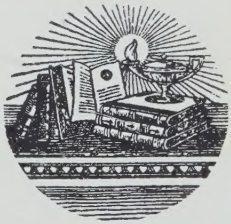

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SATIRE IN THE VICTORIAN NOVEL

BY

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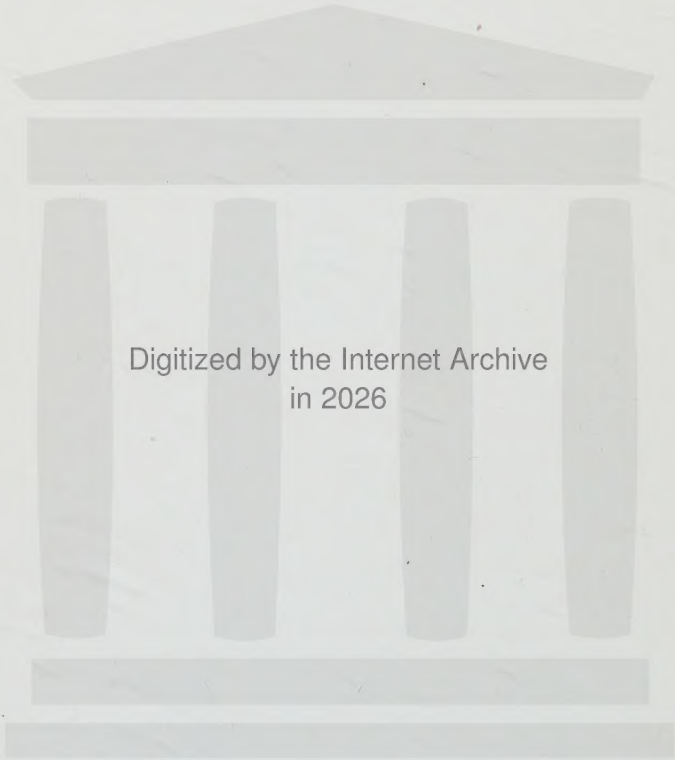
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PREFACE

If the following monograph were to be presented from the point of view of a proponent, the author would be put triply on the defensive in relation to the theme. For, from one cause or another, the trio of terms in the title lies under a certain blight of critical opinion.

Satire, being a thistle "pricked from the thorny branches of reproof," cannot expect to be cherished in the sensitive human bosom with the welcome accorded to the fair daffodil or the sweet violet. It must be content to be admired, if at all, from a safe distance, with the cold eye of intellectual appraisal.

Victorianism has the distinction of being the only period in literature whose very name savors of the byword and the reproach. To be an Elizabethan is to be envied for the gift of youthful exuberance and an exquisite joy in life. To be a Queen Annian (if the phrase may be adapted) is to be respected for the accomplishments of mature manhood,—a dignified mein, ripened judgment, and polished wit. To be a Victorian—that indeed provokes the question whether 'twere better to be or not to be. The chronological analogy cannot, however, be carried out, for the Victorian, whatever the cause of his unfortunate reputation, can hardly be accused of senility. On the contrary, the impression prevails that the startled ingenuousness, for instance, with which he opened his eyes at Darwin, Ibsen, and the iconoclasts in Higher Criticism; the vehemence with which he opposed and refuted and fulminated against everything hitherto undreampt

of in his philosophy; the complacency with which he viewed himself and his achievements, were attributes more appropriate to adolescence than to any later time of life. Withal there was little of the grace and gayety of youth, and not much more of the poise and humor of manhood. That the Victorian was never at ease, in Zion or elsewhere, that he was prone to take himself and his disjointed times very seriously, without achieving a proportionate reformation, is a charge from which he never can be acquitted. To our modern authorities, especially such dictators as Shaw and Wells, contemplating him from the vantage ground of a higher rung in the ladder of civilization, the Victorian looks as Wordsworth did to Lady Blandish, like "a very superior donkey," protected by the side-blinders of conventionality, saddled and bridled by authority, and ridden around in a circle by sentiment (most tyrannical of drivers), with much cracking of whip and raising of dust, but no real change of intellectual or spiritual locality. Nor can all the cavorting fun of Dickens, all the pungent playfulness of Thackeray, all the sardonic gibes of Carlyle, all the grotesque gesturing of Browning, all the winged irony of George Eliot and Matthew Arnold, not even all the quips and cranks in *Punch* itself, avail to quash the indictment. The Victorian may be defended, appreciated, exonerated even; he may in time succeed in living it down. But to live it down is not quite the same as to have had nothing that had to be lived down.

The Novel has been called the Cinderella of Literature. And it is true that while she may be useful, indispensable, a secret favorite of the whole family, no magic wand can give her the real enchantment of a caste that survives the stroke of twelve. She may act as the drudge to

fetch and carry our theories, or the playmate to amuse our idle hours, but she must be kept in her place, and her place is with neither the esthetic aristocracy of poetry nor the didactic patricianism of philosophy and criticism. She has, indeed, recently been fitted with a golden slipper, but her Prince hails from the Kingdom of Dollars, and his rank is recorded in Bradstreet instead of the Peerage.

The indifferent or repellent nature of a subject, even though triple distilled, has nothing to do, however, with its value as a topic for investigation. I present this study neither as apologist nor enthusiast. If we expand Browning's "development of a soul" to include the mental as well as the spiritual stages, as the poet himself did in actual practice, we must agree with him that "little else is worth study." So persistent and insistent in the mind of man has been, and still is, the satiric mood, so devoted has he been from immemorial ages to the habit of story-telling (and seldom for the mere sake of the story), so voluminous and emphatic did he become in the nineteenth century, that no complete account of him can be rendered up until, amid the infinite variety of his aspects, he has been viewed as a Victorian satirist, using as his medium the English novel.

Whatever the result of this observation may be, the process has been one of continual delight, tempered by despair; for one enters as it were a room of tremendous size not only full of curious and challenging objects (over-furnished perhaps), but supplied also with numerous doors opening into other apartments, and these ask an amount of time and attention which only the span of a Methuselah could place at one's disposal.

It must be admitted, though, that it is a happier lot to stand before open doors, even in dismay at the illimi-

table vistas, than to confront closed doors or none at all. And I wish in this connection to offer my tribute of appreciation and admiration to one who has prëeminently the scholar's talisman of Open Sesame into the many and rich realms of literature. It was my good fortune to prepare this study under the direction of Professor Ashley H. Thorndike, of Columbia University, by whose benignly severe criticism so many students have profited, by whose sure taste and searching wisdom so many have been guided. To him, to his colleagues in the English Department, and to the other officers of the University who helped to make my term of residence the satisfaction it has been, it is a pleasure to express my gratitude. To my Stanford colleague, Miss Elisabeth Lee Buckingham, I am indebted for the drudgery of copy-reading, both in manuscript and in proof, and for many valuable suggestions.

F. T. R.

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PART I

PREMISES

Satire in the Victorian Novel

CHAPTER I

THE SATIRIC SPIRIT

"Are ye satirical, sir?" inquired the Ettrick Shepherd, warily suspicious of the cryptic eulogy just pronounced by his companion on the minds and manners of the English shopocracy.

"I should be ashamed of myself if I were, James," was the grieved reply.

We know very well, however, that Christopher North was not ashamed of himself, at least not with the true contrition that leads to reformation. On the contrary, we fear that he cherished and cultivated quite shamelessly his gift of caustic wit. In any case, whether the disavowal came from ironic whim or from a concession to the popular attitude toward satire, it illustrates the first difficulty confronting the student of this indeterminate subject.

To recognize the satirical at sight, to know whether a man is telling the truth, either when he claims to be a satirist or when he disclaims the charge, is something of an accomplishment. For the complex and Protean nature of satire, *varium et mutabile semper*, has naturally led to much disagreement not only as to its existence in certain cases, but as to its justification in general. To its eulogist, usually the satirist himself, satire is an instrument of discipline with a divine commission,—a

Scourge of God. To its apologist, usually the detached observer, it is a more or less dubious means to a more or less necessary end. To its disparager, usually the satirized, it is a wanton mischief-maker, superfluous and intolerable. The personal resentment of this last may be fortified by the convenient logic which identifies the agent with the cause. "People who really dread the daring, original, impulsive character which is the foundation of the satirical," says Hannay in one of his lectures on Satire, "ingenuously blame the satirist for the state of things which he attacks."

These varieties of attitude toward satire arise not only from varieties in temperament and satirical experience, but from the diverse manifestations of satire itself. Take, for instance, those characters in literature which seem to be an incarnation of the satiric spirit. Thersites is the dealer in personalities, scoffing and gibing at the élite with the licensed audacity of the court fool. Reynard is the satirical rogue who not only perceives the weaknesses of his fellow citizens but turns them to his own advantage. Alceste is the misanthrope, "critic," as Meredith says, "of everybody save himself," but lifting his strictures out of the merely personal by attaching them to a general interpretation of life. The Hebrew *Adversary* is the cynic with a scientific zest for experiment. He impugns motives, fleers at fair appearances, prides himself on his superior penetration, and questions the price for which a prosperous Job serves God. His loss of the wager through actual test of his theory has been taken as proof that such suspicions are unwarranted, and that the trust of the Divine Idealist in human nature was justified. This conclusion, however, must be qualified by the admission that the inductive process was con-

ducted on limited data, and that if Eliphaz, Bildad, or Zophar had been chosen for the trial, the result might have been different. As it was, the final silence of the quenched satirist, and his absence from the happy ending may be construed as a sign of defeat in one instance that by no means invalidated his general attitude of doubt and interrogation.

Of all these embodiments, however, the most perfect representation of the satiric spirit is a product of English genius. The melancholy Jaques has abundant slings and arrows of his own wherewith to retaliate for those of outrageous fortune, but he never fails to wing them with laconic wit and imperturbable humor. He expressly denies being guilty of personalities.

> "What woman in the city do I name,
> When that I say the city-woman bears
> The cost of princes on unworthy shoulders?"

He snubs with careless aplomb the too oratorical Orlando, and cannily avoids the too loquacious Duke. "I think of as many matters as he," he observes, "but I give heaven thanks, and make no boast of them." He reviews the career of man, and sees him proceeding with pretentious futility through his seven sad ages to an inglorious conclusion. And yet this philosopher admits his very pessimism to be something of a pose, and turns his humor reflexively against himself. All satirists have a fondness for sucking melancholy out of a song as a weasel sucks eggs; all are prone to rail at the first born of Egypt simply because they cannot sleep, but few have the honesty to acknowledge it. Meanwhile, although this courtier claims motley as his only wear, his companions perceive the genuineness of his humanity and the value of his protests.

> "Thus most invectively he pierceth through
> The body of the country, city, court,
> Yea, and of this our life."

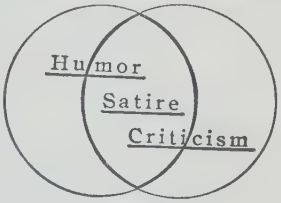
And thus have diverse manifestations of the satiric spirit appeared from time to time. Few seem to be visible just at present, but we may be sure that the Spirit of Satire has not deserted our planet. Still is he busy walking up and down in the earth and going to and fro in it. Still does he probe and mock, sometimes with penetrative wisdom, sometimes in prejudice and error, but always as a challenge not to be ignored.

Satire has not only embodied itself in certain characters of literature, but has made and maintained for itself an important place in that realm. This place may be divided into two fairly distinct areas. The narrower one is known as formal satire, and has always been expressed in verse: the Latin hexameter, the Italian *terza rima*, the French Alexandrine, the English heroic couplet. The larger and less definite section is formed by surcharging with the satiric tone some other literary type. Such a combination is found in the Aristophanic comedy, the dialogues of Lucian, the romances of Rabelais, Cervantes, and Swift. Such also are *The Rape of the Lock*, *Don Juan*, *The Bigelow Papers*, *Man and Superman*, and countless others. In addition to these there is a third estate, the largest and most heterogeneous, consisting of writings mainly serious, with a more or less pronounced satiric flavor.

Any study, therefore, which tries to deal with satire as a mode rather than a form will profit by using the adjective instead of the noun. Without fully accepting the erasure of the old literary boundaries advocated by Croce, Spingarn, and the modern school, we may say

that in this particular field at least, the substitution of the descriptive *satiric* for the categoric *satire* shows that discretion which is the better part of valor. Still, since to avoid the responsibility of deciding whether or not a given production is a satire, by the non-committal device of calling it satiric, is only to beg the question so far as a definition is concerned, it is advisable to produce some identifying label. Stated in brief, satire is humorous criticism of human foibles and faults, or of life itself, directed especially against deception, and expressed with sufficient art to be accounted as literature.

When we say, however, that satire is a union of those two intangible, subjective elements, criticism and humor, we do not assume the equation fully to be expressed by the formula—Antagonism plus Amusement equals Satire. For neither is all criticism humorous nor all humor critical. The relation is that of two circles, not coincident but overlapping.



Confusion has arisen because, while the boundaries of the two separate circles are fairly distinct in our minds, the circumference made by their conjunction is merged in their respective planes. Accordingly, the term satire is sometimes used to denote humorless criticism,—which is really invective, denunciation, any sort of reprehension; and sometimes uncritical humor,—which is mere facetiousness and jocularity. Not every prophet, preacher, or pedagogue is a satirist, nor yet every merry clown, or exuberant youth, or mild worldly-wiseman enjoying the blunders of innocent naïveté.

Professor Dewey reminds us that the ideal state of mind is "a nice balance between the playful and the serious."

But in the satiric circle a nice balance would be found only at the center. Wherever there are boundaries, there are always some sections of the enclosure nearer the margin than others. Thus, although satire is a compound, it does not follow that its fractions stand in a constant uniform ratio. On the contrary, the proportion ranges all the way from a minimum of humor in a Juvenal or a Johnson to a minimum of criticism in a Horace, a Gay, or a Lamb. Either quality may reach the vanishing point, but when it passes it, the remaining one cannot alone create satire, any more than oxygen or hydrogen can be transformed into water.

Nor can either quality be defined in other than psychological terms. The critical sense is rooted in the instincts of attraction and repulsion, the reaction of an organism to any new stimulus being *pro* or *con* according to the preëstablished harmony or antagonism between them. As each human being grows to maturity by responding to experience, he acquires his individual set of opinions and ideals, largely borrowed from the habits and conventions of his groups, ethnic, social, and what not, with a small residue of his own originality. Equipped with this outfit of criteria he looks upon life and finds it complete or wanting, tests his fellow men and approves or condemns, examines all created things and calls them good or bad. But he is so constituted that his acquiescence is likely to be somewhat passive, and his protests active, his commendation grudging and qualified, his condemmation sweeping and thorough. Says an eighteenth century satirist,— [1]

> "Broad is the road, nor difficult to find,
> Which to the house of Satire leads mankind;

[1] Churchill, in *The Author*.

Narrow and unfrequented are the ways,
Scarce found out in an age, which lead to praise."

The humorous sense is likewise an essence and an index of disposition. The inadequacy of most definitions of the ludicrous, from Aristotle's "innocuous, unexpected incongruity," to Bergson's "mechanical inelasticity," lies in their concentration on the objective side of it,—the stimulus to mirth,—whereas the subjective,—the mirthful person,—deserves the emphasis. Laughter throws a far more illuminating ray on the laugher than the laughed at, for it indicates not only taste and mood but the trend of one's philosophy. In betraying a man's idea of the incongruous, it implies his conception of the congruous, and reveals his whole coördination of life. We may, it is true, define humor by saying that intellectually it is a contemplation of life from the angle of amusement, and emotionally, a joyous effervescence over the absurdities in life ever present to the discerning eye; but we can never quite capture it, any more than pleasure or tragedy. We can, however, use these abstractions as refracted definers of character, by noting what sort of a man it is who regards such and such things as amusing, or delightful, or unendurable. For not only as a man thinks, but also as he laughs and exults and censures and suffers, so is he.

That satire is woven from double strands, the blue of rebuke and the red of wit,—becoming thereby in a chromatic sense the purple patch of literature,—is testified to by satiric theory as well as practice. The critical element may of course be taken for granted, but since it has been sometimes over-emphasized at the expense of the humorous, some testimony as to the latter must be given.

It is to Horace that we are indebted not only for the first finished formal satire, but for the first attempt at

an analysis of the then newest literary type. He sketches the history of satire as an exposure of crime, but insists that this mission may be performed with courtesy and the light touch, since even weighty matters are sometimes settled more effectively by a jest than by grim asperity.

"*Ridiculum acri*
Fortius et melius magnas plerumque secat res." [1]

It is interesting to note that his own consistent practice in this matter is acknowledged by his successor Persius, who says of him,

"Sportive and pleasant round the heart he played,
And wrapt in jests the censure he conveyed." [2]

When Jonson reintroduced the Aristophanic vehicle of comedy to carry his satire, though fashioned in a different style, he also re-voiced the Horatian satiric philosophy, promising realism,—such characters and actions as comedy would choose,

"When she would show an image of the times,
And sport with human follies, not with crimes.
Except we make 'hem such, by loving still
Our popular errors, when we know they're ill.
I mean such errors, as you'll all confess,
By laughing at them, they deserve no less:" [3]

A writer of the Restoration Period carries on the tradition:

[1] *Satires*, I, 10, 15.
[2] Drummond's translation. A similar couplet is rendered by Evans,
"He, with a sly, insinuating grace,
Laugh'd at his friend, and look'd him in the face."
[3] Preface to *Every Man in his Humour*.

"Some did all folly with just sharpness blame,
Whilst others laughed and scorned them into shame.
But of these two, the last succeeded best,
As men aim rightest when they shoot in jest." [1]

The spokesman of the eighteenth century on this point is Young.

"No man can converse much in the world but, at what he meets with, he must either be insensible, or grieve, or be angry, or smile. Some passion (if we are not impassive) must be moved; for the general conduct of mankind is by no means a thing indifferent to a reasonable and virtuous man. Now, to smile at it, and turn it into ridicule, I think most eligible; as it hurts ourselves least, and gives Vice and Folly the greatest offense.

"Laughing at the misconduct of the world will, in a great measure, ease us of any more disagreeable passion about it. One passion is more effectually driven out by another than by reason." [2]

And about the same time our first satirical novelist was avowing his own creed and performance:

"If nature hath given me any talents at ridiculing vice and imposture, I shall not be indolent, nor afraid of exerting them." [3]

Again: "I have employed all the wit and humour of which I am master in the following history; wherein I have endeavoured to laugh mankind out of their favorite follies and vices." [4]

[1] *Essay on Satire,* by the Duke of Buckingham: Dryden's Works, XV, 201.
[2] Young: Preface to the *Seven Satires.*
[3] Fielding: *Historical Register:* Dedication to the Public, III, 341.
[4] Fielding: *Tom Jones:* Dedication to George Lyttleton, VI, 5.
He also says, in *The Covent Garden Journal:* "Few men, I believe, do more admire the works of those great masters who have sent their satire (if I may use the expression) laughing into the world. Such are the great triumvirate, Lucian, Cervantes, and Swift."

The self-conscious nineteenth century is full of comments on this topic, as on all others, but two or three representative ones will suffice as examples.

It is not really the great Greek satirist but his modern interpreter who utters this explanatory sentiment:

> "Now, earnestness seems never earnest more
> Than when it dons for garb—indifference;
> So, there's much laughing: but, compensative,
> When frowning follows laughter, then indeed
> Scout innuendo, sarcasm, irony!" [1]

Finally, turning to the encyclopedia for a modern official pronouncement, we find humor again cited as a *sine qua non*.[2]

"Satire in its literary aspect may be defined as the expression in adequate terms of the sense of amusement or disgust excited by the ridiculous or unseemly, provided that humor is a distinctly recognisable element, and that the utterance is invested with literary form. Without humor, satire is invective; without literary form, it is mere clownish jesting. * * * This feeling of disgust or contempt may be diverted from the failings of man individual to the feebleness and imperfection of man universal, and the composition may still be a satire; but if the element of scorn or sarcasm were entirely eliminated it would become a sermon."

The matter of ingredients is more easily disposed of, however, than that of causation. It is obviously easier to scrutinize a finished product and see what it is made of than to go back to its origin and discover why it was made. For the latter process leads us to the domain of motives, that shadowy realm where the real is often made to hide behind the assumed or at least the instinctive

[1] Browning: *Aristophanes' Apology*. [2] Garnett, in the Enc. Brit. 9th edition.

kept down by the acquired. In this mental kingdom many an impulsive little prince has been smothered by a deliberative, ambitious usurper who felt a call to rule.

In the province of satire the real internal stimulus is temperament. If a man has a critical disposition, he is bound to criticise. If he has a keen sense of humor, he will be alive to the absurd. If he possesses both, he is a natural-born satirist and cannot escape his manifest destiny,—so long as he is not inarticulate. But the declared motives are for the most part ethical and altruistic, a lineage much more presentable and worthy of high command.

This human tendency to justify its instinctive behavior by *ex post facto* morality has produced an impressive symposium on the thesis that satire has a definite purpose and moreover a noble one. Thus while the satirist admits his malice aforethought, he protests that the malicious suffers a sea change into the beneficent, for that he must be cruel only to be kind. The modest and honest confession of Horace [1] that he wrote satire because he had to write something and was not equal to epic, was soon supplanted by the Juvenalian declaration of *saeva*

[1] "Wolves use their teeth against you, bulls their horn;
Why, but that each is to the manner born?" *Satires*, I, 1. Conington, 46.
Some modern echoes are heard. Says Byron,—

"Satiric rhyme first sprang from selfish spleen;
You doubt—see Dryden, Pope, St. Patrick's Dean."

Hints from Horace.

Taine applies his general theory to this instance:

"No wonder if in England a novelist writes satires. A gloomy and reflective man is impelled to it by his character; he is still further impelled by the surrounding manners." *Hist. of Eng. Lit.* IV, 166.

In Shaw's *An Unsocial Socialist*, one character says of another: "Besides, Gertrude despises everyone, even us. Or rather, she doesn't despise anyone in particular, but is contemptuous by nature, just as you are stout."

indignatio, and it is from this perennial spring that a steady flow of eulogy has irrigated the history of satire.

A representative of the Elizabethan group is Marston: [1]

> "I would show to be
> *Tribunus plebis*, 'gainst the villainy
> Of those same Proteans, whose hypocrisy
> Doth still abuse our fond credulity."

Milton manages here as elsewhere to sound a clarion note over the clash of seventeenth century partisanship: [2]

"A taste for delicate satire cannot be general until refinement of manners is general likewise; till we are enlightened enough to comprehend that the legitimate object of satire is not to humble an individual, but to improve the species. * * * For a satire as it is born out of a tragedy so it ought to resemble its parentage, to strike high, to adventure dangerously at the most eminent vices among the greatest persons."

Defoe [3] echoes Dryden,[4] both speaking with reasonable consistency; and even Pope [5] tries to make out a case for himself. But the completest paean is from the pen of John Brown.[6] His poetic analysis begins at the beginning:

> "In every breast there burns an active flame,
> The love of glory, or the dread of shame:
> The passion one, though various it appear,
> As brighten'd into hope, or dimm'd by fear.

[1] *Scourge of Villainy.*

[2] *Apology for Smectymnuus.*

[3] "The end of Satire is reformation." Preface to *The Trueborn Englishman.*

[4] "The true end of Satire is the amendment of vices by correction." Preface to *Absalom and Achitophel.*

[5] "Now the author, living in these times, did conceive it an endeavour worthy an honest satirist, to dissuade the dull, and punish the wicked, in the only way that was left." Preface of Martinus Scriblerus to *The Dunciad.*

[6] *An Essay on Satire.* Occasioned by the death of Pope. Inscribed to Dr. Warburton. In Dodsley's Collection of Poems, Vol. III.

Thus heav'n in pity wakes the friendly flame,
To urge mankind on deeds that merit fame:
But man, vain man, in folly only wise,
Rejects the manna sent him from the skies:"

The climax of this human error is perverted ambition and a snobbish idea of excellence:

"The daemon *Shame* paints strong the ridicule,
And whispers close, 'the world will call you fool!'

Hence Satire's pow'r: 'tis her corrective part
To calm the wild disorders of the heart.
She points the arduous heights where glory lies,
And teaches mad ambition to be wise:
In the dark bosom wakes the fair desire,
Draws good from ill, a brighter flame from fire;
Strips black Oppression of her gay disguise,
And bids the hag in native horror rise;
Strikes tow'ring pride and lawless rapine dead,
And plants the wreath on Virtue's awful head.

Nor boasts the Muse a vain imagin'd pow'r,
Though oft she mourns those ills she cannot cure,
The worthy court her, and the worthless fear;
Who shun her piercing eye, that eye revere.
Her awful voice the vain and vile obey,
And every foe to wisdom feels her sway.
Smarts, pedants, as she smiles, no more are vain;
Desponding fops resign the *clouded cane:*
Hush'd at her voice, pert Folly's self is still,
And Dulness wonders while she drops her quill."

The author's optimism mounts even to the disparagement of Force, Policy, Religion, Mercy, and Justice, in comparison with this puissant and impeccable goddess, in whose presence the wicked never cease from trembling,—especially stricken when she draws

"Her magic quill, that like Ithuriel's spear
Reveals the cloven hoof, or lengthen'd ear;

Drags the vile whisperer from his dark abode,
'Till all the daemon starts up from the toad."

Feeling perhaps that after all his client's status is a trifle dubious, her advocate continues with a caution and a climax:

"Who combats Virtue's foe is Virtue's friend;
Then judge of Satire's merit by her end:
To guilt alone her vengeance stands confin'd,
The object of her love is all mankind."

The sober eighteenth century brings us back to reality with a characteristic comment by the best satirist of the period, who admires his favorite predecessors, "not indeed for that wit and humour alone which they all so eminently possessed, but because they all endeavoured, with the utmost force of their wit and humour, to expose and extirpate those follies and vices which chiefly prevailed in their several countries." [1]

But Gifford, akin in spirit to the satirist he translated, goes to the extreme in taking the satiric office seriously:

"To raise a laugh at vice * * * is not the legitimate office of Satire, which is to hold up the vicious as objects of reprobation and scorn, for the example of others, who may be deterred by their sufferings." [2]

De Quincey carries the tradition over into the nineteenth century by reminding us that "the satirist has a reformative as well as a punitive duty to discharge." Meredith [3] agrees that "the satirist is a moral agent, often a social

[1] Fielding: *Covent Garden Journal.*
[2] Preface to the Translation of Juvenal.
[3] *Essay on Comedy*, 76.

scavenger, working on a storage of bile." Symonds [1] affirms that "Without an appeal to conscience the satirist has no *locus standi*." Browning has Balaustion say to Aristophanes:

> "Good Genius! Glory of the poet, glow
> O' the humorist who castigates his kind,
> Suave summer-lightning lambency which plays
> On stag-horned tree, misshapen crag askew,
> Then vanishes with unvindictive smile
> After a moment's laying black earth bare,
> Splendor of wit that springs a thunderball—
> Satire—to burn and purify the world,
> True aim, fair purpose; just wit justly strikes
> Injustice,—right, as rightly quells the wrong,
> Finds out in knaves', fools', cowards' armory
> The tricky tinselled place fire flashes through,
> No damage else, sagacious of true ore."

And Dawson [2] brings satiric utilitarianism into the present century:

"It is quite beside the mark to say that we do not like satire. It is equally beside the mark to say that we have never known such a world as this. The thing to be remembered is that in all ages the satirist of manners has been of the utmost service to society in exposing its follies and lashing its vices. It is the work of a great satirist to apply the caustic to the ulcers of society; and if we are to let our dislike of satire overrule our judgment, we shall not only record our votes against a Juvenal and a Swift, but equally against the whole line of Hebrew prophets."

All these citations refer more or less directly to the cause—the reason or motive for satirical utterance—but have some bearing on the effect—the tangible result of it,—since the two are to a certain extent inseparable.

[1] *The Renaissance in Italy*, V, 270. [2] *Makers of English Fiction*, 86.

They are, however, also distinct, and particularly so in this case; as cause is a psychological and hidden thing, and effect is more external and visible. In turning from the first to the second we pass from deductive argument to inductive. The logic of the former is an Idol of the Tribe, particularly of the British tribe, unable to rest until everything has been drafted under the ethic flag and brought into the moral fold. We pass also from spacious promise to rather cramped and meager performance. Satiric intent looms as large as the imposing first appearance of the giant of Destiny, in Maeterlinck's *Betrothal*; satiric accomplishment shrinks to the size of his exit as the babe in arms. And while the assertion of inexorability and omnipotence is continued bravely to the end, albeit in a voice of quavering *diminuendo*, a counter voice is also heard, repudiating extravagant claims.

Both attitudes are expressed in turn by an eighteenth century satirist. In his *Epistle to William Hogarth* Churchill exclaims,

> "Can Satire want a subject, where Disdain,
> By virtue fired, may point her sharpest strain?
> Where, clothed in thunder, Truth may roll along,
> And Candour justify the rage of song?"

But in *The Candidate*, he announces reform of his former practices, in a series of rhetorical "Enoughs," coming to a climax in—

> "Enough of Satire—in less hardened times
> Great was her force, and mighty were her rhymes."

In his own degenerate days, however,—

> "Satire throws by her arrows on the ground,
> And if she cannot cure, she will not wound.
> Come, Panegyric," * * *

In *The Author* he asks, "Lives there a man whom Satire cannot reach?" And the author of *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* declares that vice and folly will—

"More darkly sin, by Satire kept in awe,
And shrink from ridicule, though not from law."

But Marston and Defoe, already quoted on the other side, have their dubious moments. Says the former,[1]

"Now, Satire, cease to rub our galled skins,
And to unmask the world's detested sins;
Thou shalt as soon draw Nilus river dry
As cleanse the world from foul impiety."

And the latter [2] would be sanguine if he could:

"If my countrymen would take the hint and grow better-natured from my ill-natured poem, as some call it, I would say this of it, that though it is far from the best satire that ever was written, it would do the most good that ever satire did."

Gifford [3] also, though a believer in the mission of satire, admits that "to laugh at fools is superfluous, and at the vicious unwise."

Cowper [4] allows minor accomplishments:

[1] *Scourge of Villainy*, Satire II.
[2] Preface to *The Trueborn Englishmen.*
[3] Preface to his translation of Aristophanes.
[4] *The Task: The Time-Piece.*
His object is to point out the superiority of the preacher, who steps in

"* * * when the sat'rist has at last
Strutting and vaporing in an empty school,
Spent all his force and made no proselyte."

Later, however, he inadvertently admits even clerical insufficiency:

"Since pulpits fail, and sounding boards reflect
Most part an empty ineffectual sound,
What chance that I, to fame so little known,
Nor conversant with men or manners much,
Should speak to purpose, or with better hope
Crack the satiric thong?" (From *The Garden*).

"Yet what can satire, whether grave or gay?
It may correct a foible, may chastise
The freaks of fashion, regulate the dress,
Retrench a sword-blade, or displace a patch;
But where are its sublimer trophies found?
What vice has it subdu'd? whose heart reclaim'd
By rigour, or whom laugh'd into reform?
Alas! Leviathan is not so tam'd;
Laugh'd at, he laughs again; and, stricken hard,
Turns to the strike his adamantine scales,
That fear no discipline of human hands."

Young [1] grants it a fighting chance:

"But it is possible that satire may not do much good; men may rise in their affections to their follies, as they do to their friends, when they are abused by others. It is much to be feared that misconduct will never be chased out of the world by satire; all, therefore, that is to be said for it is, that misconduct will *certainly* never be chased out of the world by satire, if no satires are written. Nor is that term unapplicable to graver compositions. Ethics, Heathen and Christian, and the scriptures themselves, are, in a great measure, a satire on the weakness and iniquity of men; and some part of that satire is in verse, too. * * * Nay, historians themselves may be considered as satirists and satirists most severe; since such are most human actions, that to relate is to expose them."

The distrust of the moderns is adequately voiced by Sidgwick: [2]

"Satire is the weapon of the man at odds with the world and at ease with himself. The dissatisfied man—a Juvenal, a Swift, a youthful Thackeray—belabors the world with vocif-

[1] Preface to *The Universal Passion.*
The last part of the passage anticipates our discussion of satire as exposure.
[2] *Essays on Great Writers: Some Aspects of Thackeray.*

erous indignation, like the wind on the traveller's back, the beating makes it hug its cloaking sins the tighter. Wrong runs no danger from such chastisement. * * * Satire is harmless as a moral weapon. It is an old-fashioned fowling piece, fit for a man of wit, intelligence, and a certain limited imagination. It runs no risk of having no quarry; the world to it is one vast covert of lawful game. It goes a-travelling with wit, because both are in search of the unworthy."

Two comments on Aristophanes illustrate the *pro* and *con* of satiric accomplishment. Cope, in the Preface to his translation, remarks:

"He felt it his duty to do all he could to counteract the increasing influence of Euripides upon the rising generation, and knowing the power of ridicule, he employs this weapon constantly and mercilessly; but he is careful not to injure his own cause by exaggerated caricature, which might have created sympathy for the object of his censure."

But White, while warning us against regarding the dramatist as either "a mere moralist or a mere jester," judges by record: [1]

"If Aristophanes was working for reform, as a long line of learned interpreters of the poet have maintained, the result was lamentably disappointing; he succeeded in effecting not a single change. He wings the shafts of his incomparable wit at all the popular leaders of the day—Cleon, Hyperbolus, Peisander, Cleophon, Agyrrhius, in succession, and is reluctant to unstring his bow even when they are dead. But he drove no one of them from power."

Yet after due deduction has been made, Satire has left to it an asset of considerable net value; an influence that may be subjective if not objective, general if not specific,

[1] Introduction to Croiset's *Aristophanes and the Political Parties at Athens.*

and artistic if not rampantly ethical. As an instrument of self criticism, whereby a man may be saved from making a solemn pompous fool of himself, as an antitoxin to vanity, a solvent of sentimentality, a betrayer of hypocrisy, satire may find all the mission it needs to be respectable; and if it can also acquire a degree of grace and comeliness, it may be listed among the muses.

Now this spirit of humorous criticism, sprung from innate prejudice, nurtured by penetrating observation, enlisted at least nominally under the banner of righteousness, and out for conquest, obviously must have something to conquer;—whether he is a soldier fighting an enemy alien, or a roving knight, bound to offer combat on chivalric grounds, though aware in his candid heart that the surpassing loveliness of his lady is a claim gallantly to be maintained rather than an incontrovertible fact. In either case, whether he uses archery or artillery, he must have a target; and a student of his tactics must understand what it is, even better perhaps than he does himself.

Taken individually, the objects of satiric attack are legion, being no fewer than all such victims of human displeasure as may suitably come in for jesting rebuke. Our only chance for any sort of synthesis is to see first if these individuals may be grouped into classes, and next, if these classes may be generalized under some principle, discovered to be under some supreme command.

The grouping is indeed easily discernible. Political parties stand out, social strata, various professions and institutions and movements. But to look upon these as ridiculed for themselves is to be satisfied with a superficial view. The fault is not in themselves but in their stars that they are underlings. What are these evil stars that seem in their courses to fight against them?

The terms oftenest on the lips of satirists and historians of satire are Vice and Folly. But these fine large entities are taken at their face value and given a conventional interpretation. We are not enlightened as to what vice and folly are, and can define them only as those things which seem vicious and foolish to their several opponents. They also are among the baffling subjectivities.

Juvenal's conclusion that it is hard not to write satire, from the premise that the number of fools is infinite, is said by Herford to be "the fundamental axiom of all satire." But as a matter of fact, it was Horace who took the fool for his province, while his sterner successor rather specialized on the knave. From then on there has been as little endeavor to disentangle the two strands as to define them.

One of the earliest English satirists [1] emphasised the knavery; and another [2] includes that and folly in the same indictment. Dryden,[3] inclined to the serious Juvenalian type, discriminates between positive and negative attitudes, but not between the two stock objects.

[1] Skelton: *Colyn Clout.*

"Of no good bysshop speke I,
Nor good priest I escrye,
Good frere, nor good chanon,
Good nonne, nor good canon,
Good monke, nor good clerke,
Nor yette of no good werke;
But my recounting is
Of them that do amys."

[2] Barclay: Preface to *Ship of Fools.*

"This present Boke myght have been callyd nat inconvenyently the Satyr (that is to say) the reprehencion of foulysshnes. * * * For in lyke wyse as olde Poetes Satyriens repreved the synnes and ylnes of the peple at that tyme lyvynge; so and in lyke wyse this our Boke representeth unto the iyen of the redars the states and condicions of men."

[3] *Essay on Satire.*

Speaking of the narrowed use of the word *satire* in French and English, he adds,

"For amongst the Romans it was not only used for those discourses which decried vice, or exposed folly, but for others also where virtue was recommended. But in our modern languages we apply it only to invective poems, * * * for in English, to say Satire, is to mean reflection, as we use that word in its worst sense; or as the French call it, more properly, *medisance*."

Defoe[1] adds to the two a third, but in a somewhat casual enumeration:

> "Speak, Satire; for there's none can tell like thee
> Whether 'tis folly, pride, or knavery
> That makes this discontented land appear
> Less happy now in times of peace than war?"

Swift[2] echoes the old duality:

> "His vein, ironically grave,
> Exposed the fool, and lash'd the knave."

And Fielding,[3] though he actually finds good game in folly, evidently considers vice the prime object:

[1] *Trueborn Englishman.*

[2] *Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift.*
He adds, as to motive:

> "Yet malice never was his aim;
> He lash'd the vice, but spared the name;
> * * * * *
> His satire points at no defect,
> But what all mortals may correct;
> For he abhorr'd that senseless tribe
> Who call it humour when they gibe:
> * * * * *
> True genuine dullness moved his pity,
> Unless it offer'd to be witty."

[3] Preface to *The Intriguing Chambermaid:* Epistle to Mrs. Clive.

"But while I hold the pen, it will be a maxim with me, that vice can never be too great to be lashed, nor virtue too obscure to be commended; in other words, that satire can never rise too high, nor panegyric stoop too low."

He also makes the same point in a historical review: [1]

"In ancient Greece, the infant muses' school,
Where Vice first felt the pen of ridicule,
With honest freedom and impartial blows
The Muse attacked each Vice as it arose:
No grandeur could the mighty villain screen
From the just satire of the comic scene."

Although vice is now too powerful for such censure, he dares the lion in his den, and comforts the virtuous with reassurances:

"And while these scenes the conscious knave displease,
Who feels within the criminal he sees,
The uncorrupt and good must smile, to find
No mark for satire in his generous mind."

The nineteenth century is full of straws still blowing in the direction of Vice and Folly: such as Taine's [2] "Satire is the sister of elegy; if the second pleads for the oppressed, the first combats the oppressors." And Lionel Johnson [3] comments that Erasmus "had something in common with Matthew Arnold: a like satiric yet profoundly felt impatience with intellectual pedantry and social folly."

We may, however, see satire as opposition, and moreover opposition to vice and folly, and still be taking for granted that which demands more probing. For even if it were so simple a crusade as that, no crusade is as simple as it looks, and this one is particularly open to suspicion.

[1] Prologue to *The Coffee-House Politician.*

[2] *Hist. of Eng. Lit.:* on Dickens.

[3] *Post Liminium.*

It is therefore not wholly superfluous to ask why vice and folly are the favorite satiric goals. Psychologically it would be sufficient to say that it is because anything a man disapproves of naturally seems to him foolish if not actually vicious. But socialized man cannot admit that his reaction to anything is based on mere temperamental prejudice. Condemnation of vice and folly is of course its own justification, and humor is its own reward. Unfortunately, however, humorous condemnation is not always applicable to these offenders against taste and morality. Folly is sometimes too artless to be censured, and vice is often too serious to be ridiculed. Evidently then, yet another solution is needed, a least common denominator that will go into both, even if it does leave a remainder.

Now it happens that a body of explicit testimony, substantiated by a review of satiric practice, does indicate the existence of this unifying bond, this thing which, when present, makes both vice and folly criticizably absurd; and its generic name is deception.

This fraudulent family has two main branches: the intentional type, including hypocrisy and humbug; and the unconscious, represented by sentimentality and other forms of self-befoolment; besides a half-conscious variety, whence come vanity, snobbishness, superstition, vulgarity, and other children of perverted ambition and false reasoning. All these give plenty of scope to the satirist, even when we subtract some possibilities by the important qualification that not all that deceives is ludicrous; deception being sometimes too innocent and even altruistic and sometimes too tragic and cruel.[1]

According to this test, anything which assumes a vir-

[1] These relationships may be suggested by a graphic diagram. Not all folly is vicious, though all vice is foolish. Not all deception is either vicious or foolish,

tue when it has it not may draw satiric fire. It is the assumption itself, the pose, that furnishes the shining mark loved by the satirist.

On this point we again have Horatian testimony: [1]

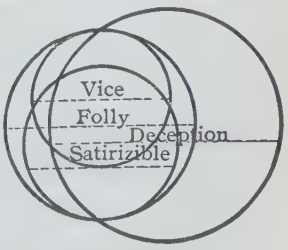
> "*Quid, cum est Lucilius ausus*
> *Primus in hunc operis componere carmina morem,*
> *Detrahere et pellem, nitidus qua quisque per ora*
> *Cederet, introrsum turpis,* * * * "

Gascoigne [2] symbolised by his steel glass that which reflected the beholders as they were, not flattered as by the plated mirror; and said his effort was to "sing a verse to make them see themselves." He also identified the root of all evil with hypocrisy;—"So that they seem, and covet not to be."

Cervantes [3] spoke of his "Herculean labor" as being "nothing more nor less than to banish mediocrity from the realm of Spanish poetry, and to sweep from its sacred precincts, which had become as foul as an Augean stable, all shams, lies, hypocrisies, and vulgar baseness whatsoever."

But the first to stress this idea with discriminating analysis was, quite appropriately, the first in his own satirical field: [4]

though folly and vice are for the most part deceitful. The circle of the satirizible practically coincides with that portion of the deception-circle which falls within vice and folly, a small margin being left outside to safeguard against inelasticity.



The connection between these two pairs of subdivisions is evident; hypocrisy belonging on the whole to the vicious branch, and sentimentality, to the foolish.

[1] *Satires*, II, 1.

[2] *The Steele Glas.*

[3] Preface to *The Journey to Parnassus.* Gibson's translation.

[4] Fielding: *Tom Jones.*

The phrase omitted from the Dryden citation above is, "where the very

"The only source of the true Ridiculous (as it appears to me) is affectation. * * * Now affectation proceeds from one of these two causes, vanity or hypocrisy; for as vanity puts us on affecting false characters, in order to purchase applause; so hypocrisy sets us on an endeavour to avoid censure, by concealing our vices under an appearance of their opposite virtues. * * *

"From the discovery of this affectation arises the Ridiculous; * * * I might observe, that our Ben Jonson, who of all men understood the Ridiculous the best, hath chiefly used the hypocritical affectation."

He remarks that this is more amusing than vanity, from the sharper contrast with reality, and adds:

"Now, from affectation only, the misfortunes and calamities of life, or the imperfections of nature, may become the objects of ridicule. * * *

"The poet carries this very far:

'None are for being what they are in fault,
But for not being what they would be thought.'"

He concludes:

"Great vices are the proper objects of our detestation, smaller faults of our pity; but affectation appears to me the only true source of the Ridiculous."

Fielding's comment on Jonson is in turn applied to him by a modern critic: [1]

"All Fielding's evil characters, it may be remarked, are accomplished hypocrites; on pure vanity or silliness he spends very few of his shafts."

name of satire is formidable to those persons, who would appear to the world what they are not in themselves:"

[1] Raleigh: *The English Novel.*

Taine [1] would find both easy to account for, on racial grounds:

"The first-fruits of English society is hypocrisy. It ripens here under the double breath of religion and morality; we know their popularity and sway across the channel. * * * This vice is therefore English. Mr. Pecksniff is not found in France. * * * Since Voltaire, Tartuffe is impossible."

Landor [2] has Lucian say:

"I have ridiculed the puppets of all features, all colours, all sizes, by which an impudent and audacious set of impostors have been gaining an easy livelihood these two thousand years. * * *

"The falsehood that the tongue commits is slight in comparison with what is conceived by the heart, and executed by the whole man, throughout life."

Meredith's portrait of The Comic Spirit is applicable to satire, for throughout the essay he gives to the term comic the connotation generally allowed to the term satiric:

"Men's future upon earth does not attract it; their honesty and shapeliness in the present does; and whenever they wax out of proportion, overblown, affected, pretentious, bombastical,

[1] *Hist. of Eng. Lit.:* on Dickens.

[2] *Imaginary Conversations:* Lucian and Timotheus.

Timotheus, exultant over the *Dialogues*, remarks that "Nothing can be so gratifying and satisfactory to a rightly disposed mind, as the subversion of imposture by the force of ridicule." Disappointed, however, in his assumption that Lucian is now ready to embrace the true faith, which turns out to be a *non sequiter*, he accuses the inflexible pagan of sacrilege, ready to turn into ridicule the true and the holy. To which Lucian in turn replies "In other words, to turn myself into a fool. He who brings ridicule to bear against Truth, finds in his hands a blade without a hilt. The most sparkling and pointed flame of wit flickers and expires against the incombustible walls of her sanctuary."

Lucian himself, in *The Angler*, declares it his business to hate quacks, jugglery, lies, and conceit.

hypocritical, pedantic, fantastically delicate; whenever it sees them self-deceived or hoodwinked, given to run riot in idolatries, drifting into vanities, congregating in absurdities, planning short-sightedly, plotting dementedly; whenever they are at variance with their professions, * * * whenever they offend sound reason, fair justice; are false in humility or mined with conceit, * * * they are detected and ridiculed."

Meredith [1] also reiterates the distinction made by Swift and Fielding in regard to misfortune:

"Poverty, says the satirist, has nothing harder in itself than that it makes men ridiculous. But poverty is never ridiculous to Comic perception until it attempts to make its rags conceal its bareness in a forlorn attempt at decency, or foolishly to rival ostentation."

And he remarks of Molière:

"He strips Folly to the skin, displays the imposture of the creature, and is content to offer her better clothing."

Of the two forms of affectation, Fielding chooses hypocrisy as better satirical game, but Bergson [2] votes for the other:

"In this respect it might be said that the specific remedy for vanity is laughter, and that the one failing that is essentially laughable is vanity."

Fuess [3] makes for the last great poetic satirist the familiar conventional claim:

"Byron is attacking not virtue, but false sentiment, false idealism, and false faith. His satiric spirit is engaged in * * * tearing down what is sham and pretence and fraud."

[1] *Essay on Comedy.* [2] *Laughter*, 174. [3] *Byron as a Satirist*, 180.

Previté-Orton [1] applies the test to politics:

"Finally, there is another service political satires render, which is peculiarly necessary to a government based on discussion. One of the greatest evils in such a state is the presence of mere words and phrases, and of the vague Pecksniffian virtues. Now to satire cant and humbug are proper game. It brings fine professions down to fact, points the contrast between the commonplace reality and its tinsel dress, and by the dread of ridicule raises the standard of plain-dealing. Other means of criticism as well act as a check on more opprobrious faults in public life. But satire is the best agent to keep us free from taking words for substance."

Apparently, then, we may conclude that deception in some form is, so far as any one thing can be, the basic object of satire, or at least is so considered by those who reflect upon it. But we must admit here as elsewhere that to recognise a phenomenon is easier than to account for it.

Not that it is difficult to account for the deception itself. No instinct is more fundamental and irresistible than that of concealment. The primary fear of molestation or harm in which it originates becomes, in a social state of sophistication and artifice, fear of exposure. With increased development, such complex and opposing factors as pride and shame, avarice and generosity, ostentation and modesty, lead us to hide things. We hide all sorts of things, good and bad; faults, virtues, deficiencies, accomplishments, hoardings, and charities. We hide from ourselves as well as from others. The left hand is as a rule not on terms of confiding intimacy with the right, whether

[1] *Political Satire in English Poetry*, 240.

In his *Temper of the Seventeenth Century in English Literature*, Wendell contributes another link to the chain of evidence:

"Sincere or not, satire is essentially a kind of writing which pretends to unmask pretense."

it is scattering seeds of kindness or getting into mischief. In the mental realm the same trick of camouflage prevails. Out of spiritual cowardice we conceal from ourselves the disturbing facts of life, and purchase optimism at the easy price of sentimentalism.

But just why this ubiquitous habit should be the peculiar province of the satirist, is another psychological problem; and as such, is best reached through a psychological solution. Why is there about deception something inherently repugnant and at the same time automatically amusing? Why is our incorrigible human predilection for belonging to the Great Order of Shams equalled only by our incorrigible human predilection for joyous exposure of others? The game seems to be mutual and perpetual, and the honors about even.

The repugnance undoubtedly comes less from a noble devotion to truth than from the dislike we all have of being deceived. Nothing do we discover with more exasperation, and admit with more reluctance than the fact that we have been fooled or hoodwinked. It is an experience that fosters present irritation and future distrust; but one which, from its very nature, demands the retort ironic rather than the lofty indignation accorded to an open injury. Most emphatically "We all hate fustian and affectation," and any knavish trickery, especially in others.

The amusement arises from the triumph of frustrating this attempt at deceptive concealment, intensified by the pleasure in perceiving an incongruity—in this case, between the assumed and the actual—which is the essence of humor.[1] The zest lies in the endless sport of hide and

[1] Hazlett, in his essay on *Wit and Humour*, remarks that "it has appeared that the detection and exposure of difference, particularly where this implies

seek, veiling and unveiling, blowing bubbles and pricking them, which is exhilarating through the play of wits and the fun of outwitting.[1]

This would perhaps be a sufficient account were it not for a certain left-handed yet inseparable connection of the psychology of the question with its ethics. Whether or not an intruder, the latter has entered in and firmly entrenched herself. When therefore she maintains that her satiric discontent is divine, she must be given a respectful hearing; though after it we seem unable to concede more than the possibility.

A lively enthusiasm for showing up the ingenuous sentimentalist or the crafty hypocrite may or may not argue a freedom on the exposer's part from these or other modes of hiding or distorting the truth; or a disinterested love for truth itself. It does go without saying that real respect and admiration for honesty and sincerity is a fundamental human trait, as witness the glowing encomiums bestowed on those guileless virtues, and it might follow that our unmoral impulses are half consciously focussed through a moral function. We must have a sin offering; and deceit is in the most eligible. Thus the satirist may, deliberately or unthinkingly, read deception into his disapproved, in order to have an excuse for laughter, just as he may read vice and folly into his disliked, in order to condemn. Nevertheless it is possible to enjoy the process of unmasking without making it a corollary that masking is wrong and therefore deserving of exposure.

Some observers are more impressed with the resem-

nice and subtle observation, as in discriminating between pretence and practice, between appearance and reality, is common to wit and satire with judgment and reasoning."

[1] Meredith characterises the chase of Folly by the Comic Spirit as conducted "with the springing delight of hawk over heron, hound after fox."

blances among the members of the great human family, and some more sensitive to the differences. When a consciousness of this variance is dissolved in a humorous solution, it precipitates a satire. The satirist is not always a victorious Saint George, and the satirized a downed and disgraced Dragon. Still, if the Saint could be secularized to the extent of a mocking light in his eye, and a taunting finger pointing at a removed disguise under which the Dragon had been masquerading, we might take the picture as a symbol of an ideal relationship between them, both ethically and artistically.

For there is an ideal in this as in all things that have variation and flexibility; and, as in them all, the question of quality is the most important one. Without some sort of criterion we can form no judgments as to value. The points we have been considering,—what satire is made of, why and how made, against what directed, and in what effective, all lead to the final one,—what is the highest type?

The trend of testimony seems to converge on three requirements for that satire which would disarm criticism while indulging in it: purity of purpose, kindliness of temper, and discrimination as to objects of ridicule.

The first is not to be confused with the reformatory motive. It means simply freedom from the very affectation censured in others. What it rules out is not so much the railing to gratify one's spleen, as the pose of altrusim while doing it; the grieved this-hurts-me-more-than-it-does-you attitude so particularly annoying to the castigated. It also discounts the selfish vanity which courts applause for wit, regardless of the means by which it is won.

On this point Horace [1] again heads the list. He denies

[1] *Satires:* I, IV, 78 ff.

the accusation that the satirist is spiteful, and continues:

> "*Liberius si*
> *Dixero quid, si forte jocosius, hoc mihi juris*
> *Cum venia dabis.*"

From the nature of English satire up to the eighteenth century, we do not expect, nor do we find, much interest in this phase of it. Then comes Young,[1] reviving the Horatian caution:

> "Who, for the poor renown of being smart,
> Would leave a sting within a brother's heart?"

And Cowper [2] completes the portrait:

> "Unless a love of virtue light the flame,
> Satire is, more than those he brands, to blame;
> He hides behind a magisterial air
> His own offenses, and strips others bare;
> Affects, indeed, a most humane concern,
> That men, if gently tutor'd, will not learn;
> That mulish folly, not to be reclaimed
> By softer methods, must be made ashamed;"

De Quincey [3] uses Pope as a horrible example of this failing, contrasting him with the indignant Juvenal:

"Pope, having no such internal principle of wrath boiling in his breast, * * * was unavoidably a hypocrite of the first magnitude when he affected (or sometimes really conceited himself) to be in a dreadful passion with offenders as a body. It provokes fits of laughter * * * to watch him in the process of brewing the storm that spontaneously will not come; whistling, like a mariner, for a wind to fill his satiric

[1] *Universal Passion.*
[2] *Charity.*
[3] *Literary Theory and Criticism.* The Poetry of Pope.

sails; and pumping up into his face hideous grimaces in order to appear convulsed with histrionic rage. * * * As it is, the short puffs of anger, the uneasy snorts of fury in Pope's satires, give one painfully the feeling of a locomotive-engine with unsound lungs."

Whether these strictures are just or not, the principle back of them is sound; and more pithily summed up by Landor's [1] "Nobody but an honest man has a right to scoff at anything."

Browning [2] carries the idea a step farther, and sounds a warning to dwellers in glass houses:

> "Have you essayed attacking ignorance,
> Convicting folly, by their opposites,
> Knowledge and wisdom? Not by yours for ours,
> Fresh ignorance and folly, new for old,
> Greater for less, your crime for our mistake!"

The demand for kindliness of temper may seem paradoxical, but for that very reason it is the more insistent. Being under suspicion of unkindness, vindictive spite, retaliation, satire must either admit the charge or prove the contrary, for the real paradox lies in the highest moral claim being made for the literary *genre* of the greatest immoral possibilities.

However, until the modern humanitarian cult came in, it seemed content to admit the charge. After Horace, with a few isolated exceptions, as Swift [3] and Cowper,[4]

[1] *Imag. Conv.* Lucian to Timotheus.

[2] *Arist. Apol.*

[3] In spite of Cowper's and Byron's assertions to the contrary.

[4] "All zeal for a reform that gives offense
To peace and charity, is mere pretense;
A bold remark; but which, if well applied,
Would humble many a tow'ring poet's pride." (*Charity.*)

satire seemed rather to cherish malice and glory in rudeness, often mistaking peevish scolding for noble scorn. Its keynote was "A flash of that satiric rage," or, according to Hall,

> "The Satire should be like the porcupine,
> That shoots sharp quills out in each angry line."

Byron was the last example of both the professional, concentrated form and the truculent mood. Tennyson [1] voices the new spirit of his century:

> "I loathe it: he had never kindly heart,
> Nor ever cared to better his own kind,
> Who first wrote satire, with no pity in it."

Birrell,[2] less caustic than De Quincey about Pope, still uses him as an instance of how not to do it:

"Dr. Johnson is more to my mind as a sheer satirist than Pope, for in satire character tells more than in any other form of verse. We want a personality behind—a strong, gloomy, brooding personality; soured and savage, if you will * * * but spiteful never."

Even the traits of gloom and savagery might be dispensed with, and room made for an infusion of sweetness and light. This is implied in the condition laid down by Lionel Johnson: [3]

"To tilt at superstition, to shoot at folly, is seldom a grateful or a gratifying pursuit, if there be no depth of purpose in it, nothing but pleasure in the consciousness of destructive power, no feeling of sympathetic pity, no tenderness somewhere in the heart, no cordiality sweetening the work of overthrow."

[1] *Sea Dreams.* [2] *Collected Essays*, I, 187. [3] *Post Liminium.*

And Garnett [1] concludes:

"Satirists have met with much ignorant and invidious depreciation, as though a talent for ridicule was necessarily the index of an unkindly nature. The truth is just the reverse."

Discrimination as to objects of satire has reference not to their nature, as foolish, vicious, deceitful, but to their legitimacy as objects. It is a matter of taste and justice on the part of the satirist.

The first definite reproof of heedlessness on this score is given in the memorial tribute to Pope: [2]

> "Dart not on Folly an indignant eye:
> Whoe'er discharged artillery on a fly?
> Deride not Vice: absurd the thought and vain,
> To bind the tyger in so weak a chain.
>
> * * * * * * * *
>
> The Muse's labour then success shall crown,
> When Folly feels her smile, and Vice her frown.
>
> * * * * * * * *
>
> Let SATIRE then her proper object know,
> And ere she strikes, be sure she strikes a foe.
> Nor fondly deem the real fool confest,
> Because blind *Ridicule* conceives a jest."

Another critic [3] of that time utters a similar caution:

[1] Preface to *Headlong Hall*, in the Aldine edition of Peacock, 40. In his *Essay on Comedy*, Meredith goes beyond mere absence of hate:

"You may estimate your capacity for comic perception by being able to detect the ridicule of them you love, without loving them the less; and more by being able to see yourself somewhat ridiculous in dear eyes, and accepting the correction their image of you proposes," 72.

It is true that on the next page he differentiates,—"If you detect the ridicule, and your kindliness is chilled by it, you are slipping into the grasp of satire." But he is evidently using satire in the older, narrower sense.

[2] John Brown's *Essay on Satire.*

[3] *Spectator*, 209. L.

"A satire should expose nothing but what is corrigible, and make a due discrimination between those who are, and those who are not the proper objects of it."

The best modern expression [1] of this idea happens to be an interpretation of a pioneer satirist. And it is distinctly modern in its recognition that while the real object of satire must be an abstraction,—the sin not the sinner—it must, to be artistic, have a concrete embodiment,—the sinner rather than the sin. The Greek dramatist explains:

"Yet spiteless in a sort, considered well,
Since I pursued my warfare till each wound
Went through the mere man, reached the principle
Worth purging from Athenai. Lamachos?
No, I attacked war's representative;
Kleon? No, flattery of the populace;
Sokrates? No, but that pernicious seed
Of sophists whereby hopeful youth is taught
To jabber argument, chop logic, pore
On sun and moon, and worship Whirligig."

But while the good satirist must have these assets, it does not follow that the possession of them will guarantee good satire. It can only be said that without them he cannot be ranked high, though, having them, he may not be ranked at all. It may be difficult for a Juvenal not to write satire, but it is difficult for anyone to produce a fine example of this, as of any other form of art. No more than any art is it exempt from a recognition of truth [2] and

[1] Browning: *Aris. Apol.* Cf. Fielding, *Tom Jones*, VI, 357, for a similar distinction.

[2] Cf. Brown's *Essay on Satire* for scorn of Shaftesbury's idea that ridicule is the test of truth; refuted ironically in the lines,—

even beauty, though its connection with them is the paradoxical one of drawing attention to their opposities. It is a truism that many things are best understood and appreciated by a portrayal of contrasts. In this case it is a perception of the congruous that is particularly concerned, and it is implied in the satirist's keen sense of the incongruous.

The satirist has not only these normal obligations, but some peculiar dangers. He is in as perilous a position as Sir Guyon in his voyage to the realm of Acrasia: threatened by the didacticism that besets the critic, the vulgarity and rudeness that prey upon the jester, the prejudice and injustice that warp the opponent, the smugness that undermines the reformer. Moreover, he has his hampering limitations. He is forever confined to the middle plane of life, shut out alike from its sublime heights and tragic depths.

Added to this restriction in range is another in quantity. The nature of satire makes it better adapted for the trimming than the whole cloth. Its rôle in the *dramatis personæ* of literature is restricted to the minor parts, but this subordination in place does not mean a negligible rank. The untrimmed garment, the all-star cast, these are not desirable even when possible. For the accessory there is also an ideal whose attainment is quite as important as though it pertained to the main substance.

> "Deride our weak forefathers' musty rule,
> Who *therefore* smil'd, *because* they saw a fool;
> Sublimer logic now adorns our isle,
> We *therefore* see a fool, *because* we smile."

He concludes that wit is safe only when rationalized:

> "*Then* mirth may urge, when reason can explore,
> *This* point the way, *that* waft us to the shore."

(Carlyle expresses a similar opinion in his essay on Voltaire.)

In the case of satire such a standard would call for censure that is candid and just, wit that is spontaneous and refined, both actuated by sincere motives, and directed against certain failings of humanity rather than against the human individuals themselves, though these must body forth the abstractions otherwise intangible,—the combination producing an effect essentially truthful and artistic. That all this can come only from one who is more than a mere satirist is axiomatic, and indeed so fundamentally true that it might be said that the more of a satirist a man is in quantity, the less is his chance for fine quality.

The modern author has conquered these requirements and obstacles, not by taking arms against his sea of troubles, but by the less intrepid and more diplomatic method of disowning his title. The satirist is obsolete, but the satiric writer, or even better, the writer with a satiric touch, is more in evidence than ever. It is perhaps too much of a challenge to say that Shakespeare is a greater satirist than Aristophanes, Jonson, or Molière; but no one would deny the superior quality of his smaller amount. The aroma of his delicate spice and lemon extract has not only lasted longer than their pepper and vinegar, but is better relished by the modern palate. The nineteenth century had no Shakespeare to "stoop from the height of a serene intelligence to sport with satire," but its best satire came from those who took it least seriously and insinuated it with least pomp and circumstance. And so far from being the most conspicuous in the satiric field, these who are greatest in this matter are also greatest and best known for other than satiric gifts and accomplishments.

While these humorous critics would be more content

than their forerunners with the early dictum that satire was "invented for the purging of our minds," [1] rather than for the practical consequences sometimes claimed for it, yet they would not adopt the suceeding phrase of the definition,—"in which human vices, ignorance and errors, * * * are severely reprehended;" for they would qualify more carefully the objects, and abstain from severity in their reprehension.

This dividing line among objects would make, however, a scientific rather than an ethical bisection. The "stolidly conscientious performance" of confining the practice of satire to a moral issue, does indeed, as Dr. Alden points out,[2] argue a "deficiency in wit" that marks the Anglo-Saxon mind. But as the Englishman became more cosmopolitan, he learned to disguise such of his innate solemnity as he could not shed. That he has absorbed more completely the more easily assimilated Hebrew and Roman traits, has not prevented him from acquiring some also from the Greek and the French. The Victorian is naturally a multiplex compound, and in him we see all these elements in various stages of conflict and combination.

[1] Heinsius, in his *Dissertations on Horace*. A conception drawn perhaps from the Aristotelian "purging of our passions" through tragedy.

[2] *Rise of Formal Satire in England*. 49.

CHAPTER II

THE CONFLUENCE

Our present study is concerned with the union of two ancient streams of literature as they come together on the fertile plain of the nineteenth century. This marriage of a satiric Medway and a fictional Thames is a happy English event, though by no means the first alliance between these historic families. In their long careers they are found sometimes entirely separate, but very often united. The latter course works for a decided mutual advantage, with a preponderance of gain accruing to satire, as fiction can live without satire far better than satire without fiction.

A narrative of entire gravity may be a gracious and splendid thing; indeed, pure tragedy is perhaps the highest form of art. But when satire is divorced from fiction it must dispense with fiction's great contribution, the garment of warm imagination and colorful concreteness; and be content with the severe raiment of bald didacticism and chill abstraction. In truth, satire has always been not only the greater beneficiary but the more dependent partner, though what it has in turn supplied is of unquestionable value. It is like an entertaining but unequipaged traveler, always asking for a ride. Even when it apparently had an establishment of its own and was recognized as a literary *genre*, it was not independent with the independence of the lyric, the drama, or the treatise, but was constantly borrowing furniture from them all.

Hence when satire invaded Victorian fiction,—or was adopted by it,—the conjunction brought its benefits to both. The former profited qualitatively from the antidote furnished by creative construction to destructive censure, and quantitatively by the improvement resulting from diminution,—that subordination which is the secret of success with all seasoning, trimming, and such accessories. The latter gained, not so much by the mere infusion of pleasantry, for that refreshing element has a deplorable tendency to degenerate into ill bred pertness, as by the toning up of the criticism inseparable from the realistic novel, and by the pungent and dramatic turn given to its didacticism. "Som mirthe or som doctryne" has ever been the demand of the Englishman, and he has relished them best in that happy unison supplied by satire.

Hence also the combination was but a new and more consequential celebration of an old, traditional connection. From the Greek Menippean mixture and the Milesian tale the line extends, with innumerable ramifications into fabliaux, burlesques, allegories, letters, and characters, in prose and verse, to the perfected eighteenth-century product, whence the increasingly perfected product of the nineteenth century immediately is derived.

Like all such associations, this one is neither accidental on the one hand nor consciously intentional on the other, but is the result of many forces and influences set in operation by circumstances, and available for great effectiveness if rightly comprehended and wisely used. In this Victorian situation we are confronted with the dual factors: a literary form raised to tremendous prestige by a rich inheritance and an especial *rapprochement* with its own times; and a prevailing temper of humorous criticism

which could not fail to thrive under the double stimulus of a fermenting environment about which there were endless things to be said, and a general liberation from external control which allowed these seething utterances free and full play of expression.

Thus have all things worked together for the good of the Victorian novel. It was fortunate alike in its endowment, its alliances, and its surroundings. A period of such upheaval, such introspection, such anxious responsibility, and withal such zest of life, all diffused through a democratic atmosphere, could best be interpreted by a form of literature which, besides being in itself thoroughly democratic, gives large scope for the author's comments and conclusions.

The drama is an excellent reflector, but necessarily impersonal; a dilemma that is dodged rather than solved by the Shavian device of Prefaces. The lyric, on the contrary, is too personal to be representative. And concentrated exposition is admittedly strong meat for the intellectual babes who constitute the vast majority, or even, as a steady diet, for children of a larger growth. This does not mean, of course, that the novel is a childish product or plaything; but that its union of the dramatic and didactic, the emotional and rational, the picturesque and significant, the merry and sad, together with its absolutely unrestricted range in material, makes it ideal as a popular type in the best sense of the word.

A critic of the time half ironically remarks,— [1]

"The future historians of literature * * * will no doubt analyze the spirit of the age and explain how the novelists, more or less unconsciously, reflected the dominant ideas which were

[1] Leslie Stephen: *George Eliot*, 67–68.

agitating the social organism. * * * The novelists were occupied in constructing a most elaborate panorama of the manners and customs of their own times with a minuteness and psychological analysis not known to their predecessors. Their work is, of course, an implicit criticism of life."

With all the encouragement bestowed upon them the Victorian novelists could indeed do no less than live up to their opportunities. Not *ad astra per aspera* lay their destiny. Nothing more was asked of them than to refrain from burying their talents, and to this admonition they were zealously obedient.

The writers themselves supply striking inductive data as to the general diffusion both of fiction and satire. A list of the dozen most prominent Victorian novelists shows that no one of them was wholly devoid of interest in public affairs, and none was entirely lacking in the satiric touch. On the other hand, every one of them saw more on his horizon than current events, and all were something more than mere critics or humorists or even both.

They were themselves of the Victorian Age. Each one might say *Pars fui*, if not *magna*. None therefore had a detached point of view, nor a long perspective. But though their vision was microscopic rather than telescopic, it was searching and enthusiastic, and the report it made was honest if not always dispassionate. It could hardly be otherwise for those who were alive and awake at a time when new information was creating new ideas, and these in turn were becoming dynamic in new movements, political, religious, educational, social. All these things were too tremendous and important to be taken otherwise than seriously. The dominant feeling was grave and earnest, as one of its interpreters has said: [1]

[1] Thorndike, *English Literature* in *Lectures on Literature*, 268–9.

"In the Victorian era, which we have found so neglectful of literary standards, Literature has been of greater social and ethical stimulus than ever before. * * * It throbs with a new sympathy for those who toil unceasingly in poverty, and a new bewilderment upon the realization that the world which is changing so rapidly is still so full of misery and hopelessness. * * * But, as the world went, the main impulse and the main characteristic of Victorian Literature became this great sense of pity for things as they are and of an imperious duty to make them better."

But the sense of pity was sometimes voiced with wit, and one of the sharpest weapons at the service of duty was the shaft of ridicule. With nothing to satirize, society would be a paradise. With no satirists, it would be rather a dull inferno. But it is our human world that is purgatorial.

Since the purpose of our present study is to discover the proportion and nature of the satiric element in Victorian fiction, to note its relation to the rest of the work, and to reach some conclusion as to the total effect of its presence and use, it might aid in clearness to subjoin a table of names and dates of the novelists with whom we are concerned.

Name	*Birth*	*Period of Publication* [1]	*Death*
Peacock	1785	1816–1861	1866
Lytton	1803	1827–1873	1873
Disraeli	1804	1826–1880	1881
Gaskell	1810	1848–1865	1865

[1] This theoretically includes only the novel, though the term is used in the widest sense. In the cases of Thackeray, Dickens, Eliot, and Meredith, the line is rather hard to draw between the novel and sketches, tales, short stories, and burlesques. Peacock, Lytton, Disraeli, and Butler force us to make the limits of the novel decidedly flexible.

Name	*Birth*	*Period of Publication*	*Death*
Thackeray	1811	1844–1862	1863
Dickens	1812	1837–1870	1870
Reade	1814	1853–1884	1884
Trollope	1815	1855–1880	1882
Brontë	1816	1847–1853	1855
Kingsley	1819	1848–1871	1875
Eliot	1819	1859–1876	1880
Meredith	1828	1859–1895	1909
Butler	1835	1872–1901	1902

This list, reaching from Scott to Hardy, not inclusive, has been reckoned as a round dozen, but it actually numbers a baker's dozen.[1] The noteworthy thing about it is that it would probably be agreed upon as the preëminent list on any count; so that those who are excluded on the score of being too consistently serious or romantic, as Yonge, Collins, Blackmore, Henry Kingsley, MacDonald, would hardly be included on the score of quality, although some of them might rival some of the least among those chosen as members of the satirico-realistic group.

A glance at the preceding table reveals an obvious chronological division into five parts; although the first and the two last consist of one man each. The second contains only two names; and their separation from the main group occurs at the beginning rather than at the end, for Lytton's race ran beyond five of those who started

[1] If it were desirable to eliminate the thirteenth chair, it might be done in a number of ways. Peacock might be ruled out as a contemporary of the earlier generation, as *Gryll Grange* is all that carries him over. Butler on the other hand belongs to the later, except that *Erewhon* appeared in the year of *Middlemarch*. As a satirist, Brontë is so near the edge of the circle that her inclusion at all is questionable. Since it happens, however, that the year of her death coincides with that of Reade's first novel, we might fancy her yielding a place to him, so that there were never more than twelve at one time.

later, and Disraeli's beyond seven. Of those, only Reade published novels after 1880.

This main group is one of those remarkable concentrations in which destiny seems to delight. When the second decade of the century gave to the world eight great names in this field alone, and some equally distinguished ones in others, it surely filled its quota toward the advance of civilization.

Meredith comes enough later than this outpouring of God's plenty to be classed by himself chronologically, especially as he must be by the character of his work also, in spite of the fact that his first novel belongs to the same prolific year as the first of George Eliot's.

The middle of the century is thus also the center of a circle of activity whose radius extends for about two decades on either side, passing thence into thinner aired intermediate zones,—transition periods from the eighteenth and to the twentieth centuries, seasons whose energies are potential, or spent, rather than vigorously kinetic.

But this central period, something more than a generation, and less than a half century, is dynamic enough. It has frequently been described, and its activities—Chartism, the Oxford Movement, Utilitarianism, Positivism, the Industrial Revolution, Christian Socialism, Darwinism, Pre-Raphaeliteism—are an oft-told tale. It is only to be remembered that this was the atmosphere breathed by the majority of our novelists, and these the vital interests which would concern them in so far as they were concerned with the public affairs of their time.

A review of the satiric strain in literature gives an interesting clew both to the fact and the significance of the relation of satire to the total literary product.

Nor can one be estimated independently of the other. There is, of course, no such thing as a pure, or mere, satirist. Even a saturated solution involves two elements. The dissolved substance must have a medium to be dissolved in. Starting from this point, we may classify the most conspicuous names according to this relationship.

There are first the completely surcharged. But the important matter is whether the container is itself large,—Aristophanes, Juvenal, Swift, Voltaire,—or of smaller mold and less capacity,—Dunbar, Skelton, Smollett, Churchill, Gifford. To this class come no recruits from the nineteenth century. *Sæva indignatio*, no longer makes verses, even when witticized, having been put out of fashion by the autonomic humor which informs the sophisticated critic that of all incongruous things the most incongruous and absurd is the satirist who takes himself seriously.

Next come those whose absolute amount of satire may be equal to that of the preceding, but whose versatile interests make it relatively smaller. It is neither of their life a thing apart, nor yet their whole existence. Such are Horace, Cervantes, Jonson, Dryden, Boileau, Pope, Fielding, Burns, Byron. This class on a smaller scale is represented by Gascoigne, Wyatt, Hall, Donne, Lodge, Addison, Goldsmith, Hood, Moore, Mark Twain. Among these we find about half of our novelists,—Peacock and Butler, Dickens and Trollope, Thackeray and Meredith.

In the third division satire is measured still more by the law of diminishing returns. It is composed of those who are never thought of as satirists, not even as satirical, and yet are very far from being innocent. Such are the Hebrew Prophets and the author of *Job*, Euripides, Spen-

ser, Shakespeare, Milton (in his prose), Johnson, Scott, Shelley, Browning. Similar but of lesser magnitude are Erasmus, More, Defoe, Young, Cowper, Blake, De Quincey. Here are found the other half of the novelists,—Lytton, Disraeli, Gaskell, Reade, Brontë, Kingsley. The impression given by these is not so much a solution at all as of separate and distinguishable particles: of elements native and yet not integral,—like fish in water. They might be taken away, and though the total effect would be very much changed, the real character of the liquid would not.

Quite the opposite of this is the condition of the fourth estate. Here the process of amalgamation is carried to an extreme, one might say, paradoxically, to the vanishing point. It resembles the first class in that the satire is pervasive, and the third in that it is of relatively small quantity; so small that it hardly seems worth taking into account, yet it could not be abstracted. If it could, it would leave a scarcely dinimished but almost unrecognizable remainder. It is not revealed so much as betrayed. It seldom indulges in anything so bald as overt satire, or so conscious even as covert innuendo. It is the tone of a personality. It is not Aristotle nor Virgil nor Wyclif nor Wordsworth nor Tennyson. It is Homer, Plato, Lucretius, Dante, Langland, Burton, Gibbon, Sterne, Austen, Arnold, Carlyle, Hardy, Anatole France. Among the Victorian novelists it is George Eliot.

To this matter of quantity there is a fairly definite relation of quality. The fact that the largest quantity is now a discarded type indicates that relation to be one of inverse proportion. The second and third divisions evince hilarity, sarcasm, shoddy flippancy, or profound wit, according to the temperaments of the writers.

Therein lies the greatest variety. The fourth occupies the great field of irony. It is the *siccum lumen*, occasionally flashing, usually lambent, smouldering, gravely glowing.

Amid these differences in kind and degree, the Victorian novelists had a sort of unity in possessing a certain sense of satire, more or less consciously realized, and of themselves as satirists. This is not only discernible in the general air they have of intending to do it, but is made visible by remarks in the nature of Confessions of a Satirist voiced by about half their number.

"Let those who cannot nicely and with certainty discern," says Charlotte Brontë in *Shirley*, "the difference between the tones of hypocrisy and those of sincerity, never presume to laugh at all, lest they have the miserable misfortune to laugh in the wrong place, and commit impiety when they think they are achieving wit."

Thackeray,[1] the "cynic", is the one to reiterate most strongly the Pauline creed that love of mankind is the root of all good. He remarks that humor means more than laughter, and adds:

"The humorous writer professes to awaken your love, your pity, your kindness—your scorn for untruth, pretension, imposture—your tenderness for the weak, the oppressed, the unhappy. To the best of his means and ability he comments on all the ordinary actions and passions of life almost. He takes upon himself to be the week-day preacher, so to speak. Accord-

[1] *English Humorists; Swift*, 2.

Cf. Kingsley: "One cannot laugh heartily at a man if one has not a lurking love for him." *Two Years Ago*, 143.

And Meredith: "And to love Comedy you must know the real world, and know men and women well enough not to expect too much of them, though you may still hope for good." *Essay on Comedy*, 40. Also: "You share the sublime of wrath, that would not have hurt the foolish, but merely demonstrate their foolishness." Ibid. 85.

ingly, as he finds, and speaks, and feels the truth best, we regard him, esteem him—sometimes love him."

Trollope [1] agrees as to the lay-clerical office:

"I have always thought of myself as a preacher of sermons, and my pulpit as one which I could make both salutary and agreeable to my audience."

Dickens [2] also claims the intent of speaking the truth in love:

"Cervantes laughed Spain's chivalry away, by showing Spain its impossible and wild absurdity. It was my attempt, in my humble and far-distant sphere, to dim the false glitter surrounding something which really did exist, by showing it in its unattractive and repulsive truth."

The greatest unamimity is as to objects. Peacock [3]

[1] *Autobiography*, 133.

[2] Preface to *Oliver Twist*, xv.

That Dickens was mistaken as to the real point of *Don Quixote*, does not impair his argument.

Thackeray had the same motive, of course, in his ridicule of *Paul Clifford* and the sentimental-picaresque; not because it was sentimental or picaresque, but because it was misleading. In that respect it was he who inherited the mantle of Cervantes, as did Fielding before him in his ridicule of Richardson.

[3] "The vices that call for the scourge of satire, are those which pervade the whole frame of society, and which, under some specious pretense of private duty, or the sanction of custom and precedent, are almost permitted to assume the semblance of virtue." *Melincourt*, 160. (And here it is the pretense that makes it vulnerable.)

In the Introduction, *Maid Marian* is described to Shelley as a "comic romance of the twelfth century, which I shall make the vehicle of much oblique satire on all the oppressions that are done under the sun."

He became, however, so carried away with the romance that he lost sight of the satire, except for brief glimpses.

In the Preface to *Headlong Hall* (1837 edition) he rounds up the current follies, under the name Pretense:

"Perfectibilians, deteriorationists, statu-quo-ites, phrenologists, transcenden-

and Trollope [1] in conventional imitation of the old school speak of castigating vice, but they also in other places join the universal chorus against folly, and folly as an impostor.

Disraeli [2] comes in on this:

"Teach us that pretension is a bore. * * * Catch the fleeting colors of that sly chameleon, Cant, and show what excessive trouble we are ever taking to make ourselves miserable and silly."

Reade [3] adds a word:

"Self-deception will probably cease with the first blast of the archangel's trumpet; but what human heart will part with it till then?"

talists, political economists, theorists in all sciences, projectors in all arts, morbid visionaries, romantic enthusiasts, lovers of music, lovers of the picturesque, and lovers of good dinners, march, and will march forever, *pari passu*, with the march of mechanics which some facetiously call the march of intellect. * * * The array of false pretensions, moral, political, and literary, is as imposing as ever; * * * and political mountebanks continue, and will continue, to puff nostrums and practice legerdemain under the eyes of the multitude; following * * * a course as tortuous as that of a river, but in a reverse process: beginning by being dark and deep, and ending by being transparent." 46–7.

His motto for *Crochet Castle* is:

"De monde est plein de fous, et qui n'en veut pas voir,
Doit se tenir tout seul, et casser son miroir."

[1] "And as I had ventured to take the whip of the satirist in my hand, I went beyond the iniquities of the great speculator who robs everybody, and made an onslaught also on other vices—on the intrigues of girls who want to get married, on the luxury of young men who prefer to remain single, and on the puffing propensities of authors who desire to cheat the public into buying their volumes." *Autobiography*, speaking of *The Way We Live Now*.

Of *Framley Parsonage:* "The story was thoroughly English. There was a little fox-hunting and a little tuft-hunting; some Christian virtue and some Christian cant. There was no heroism and no villainy." *Autobiography*, 129.

[2] *The Young Duke*, 173.

[3] *Never Too Late to Mend*, 216.

Thackeray [1] emphasizes it in his description of that little world in which he had an almost unholy interest:

"Vanity Fair is a very vain, wicked, foolish place, full of all sorts of humbugs and falsenesses and pretensions. And while the moralist * * * professes to wear neither gown nor bands, but only the very same long-eared livery in which his congregation is arrayed; yet, look you, one is bound to speak the truth as far as one knows it, whether one mounts a cap and bells or a shovel hat; and a deal of disagreeable matter must come out in the course of such an undertaking."

Later [2] he takes it out on Becky and her kind:

"Such people there are living and flourishing in the world—Faithless, Hopeless, Charityless; let us have at them, dear friends, with might and main. Some there are, and very successful, too, mere quacks and fools; and it was to combat and expose such as these, no doubt, that laughter was made."

Dickens [3] puts it more abstractly:

"Lest there should be any well-intentioned persons who do not perceive the difference between religion and the cant of religion, piety and the pretense of piety, a humble reverence for the great truths of Scripture and an audacious and offensive

[1] *Vanity Fair*, I, 104.

[2] Ibid., I, 106.

Cf. his Preface to *The Newcomes:* "This, then, is to be a story, may it please you, in which jackdaws will wear peacocks' feathers, and awaken the just ridicule of the peacocks, in which, while every justice is done to the peacocks themselves * * * exception will yet be taken to the absurdity of their rickety strut, and the foolish discord of their pert squeaking;" 7.

[3] Preface to *Pickwick* (1847 edition), xix.

Cf. his letter to Charles Knight: "My satire is against those who see figures and averages, and nothing else—the representatives of the wickedest and most enormous vice of this time—and the men who, through long years to come, will do more to damage the real, useful truths of political economy than I could do (if I tried) in my whole life:" *Letters*, I, 363.

obtrusion of its letter and not its spirit in the commonest dissensions and meanest affairs of life, to the extraordinary confusion of ignorant minds, let them understand that it is always the latter, and never the former, which is satirized here. Further, that the latter is here satirized as being, according to all experience, inconsistent with the former, impossible of union with it, and one of the most evil and mischievous falsehoods existent in society."

The theme of *The Tragic Comedians* is that "The laughter of the gods is the lightning of death's irony over mortals. Can they have," adds Meredith, "a finer subject than a giant gone fool?" But it is in the *Ode to the Comic Spirit* rather than in stray observations in the novels or even in the *Essay on Comedy* that the Meredithian satiric philosophy is most pithily set forth. For in the myth of Momus and the Olympians, the mirthful satirist and the self-satisfied divinities who paid a heavy price for their resentment of his incandescent frankness, we have a symbol of what satire might do if permitted, and if not permitted, what penalties may descend. The Comic Spirit is apostrophized as the "Sword of Common Sense," whose service and sport it is

"This shifty heart of ours to hunt."

Since man is a deceiver and a self-deceiver,

"Naming his appetites his needs,
Behind a decorative cloak,"

it is obvious that the only cure for his ailment is the simple but drastic one of removing the cloak. So long indeed as there are masks, there will be fingers that itch to pluck them off. The time may come,—we can scarcely affirm that it now is,—when masks shall have vanished

from the faces of a seraphic race. But in the nineteenth century they were very much in evidence; and quite as palpably in evidence were the spying eyes and the encroaching fingers of the nineteenth-century satirists.

PART II

METHODS

CHAPTER I

THE ROMANTIC

The implication behind that sage instruction, "First catch your hare," is that after the catching the rest will be easy. But, admitting that the second step cannot antedate the first, we are still confronted by the fact that the achievement of the first must be followed by the second in order to be rendered efficacious. "How serve him up?" is the next question.

It is the question of method, the problem of ways and means, and a most important one it is in the case of satire, for it is here that the element of humor finds its field of operations. In its cause and effect satire is serious, nominally at least. In the connecting link, the means reaching from design to end, it must use wit or humor.

A certain object is perceived by a certain observer to be ridiculous. How is he to make it seem ridiculous to other observers, whose unaided perception may not equal his? He is able to do it by drawing upon the common fund of human experience and idea in regard to humor. If the satirist can subsume his object under one of the universally recognized categories, he makes it *ipso facto* absurd. So automatic is this effect that only the analytic spectator will stop to question the justice of the classification. Socrates dangling in a basket, Volpone caught in his own trap, Hudibras gawkily playing the Cavalier, Atticus monoplizing the throne but fearful of pretenders, Southey routing infernal legions by the mere offer to read aloud his

poem, Ichabod Crane fleeing when only Brom Bones pursued,—these are ludicrous to the imagination, whether or not the sentence is ratified by the intellect.

Humoristic devices are so numerous as to call for some classification, the choice of any one being made at the expense of other possibilities. The traditional cleavage between the Horatian and the Juvenalian types is characteristically described by Saintsbury: [1]

"From Horace and Persius downward there have been two satiric manners:—one that of the easy well-bred or would be well-bred man of the world who suspends everything on the adunc nose and occasionally scratches with still more adunc claws, the other that of the indignant moralist reproving the corruptions of the times."

But by the nineteenth century the indignant moralist was considerably subdued, even in England, and his reproof more likely to be acidulous than acrid. For this reason some other antithesis would seem more useful to our present study; and from the fact that our satiric vehicle is made on the two general models known as romantic and realistic, the same division appears most workable to apply to the satiric methods used in fiction. Both terms, however, are too nebulous to be used without the precaution of stating the sense in which they are at present used. As to the former, this statement by Stoddard sums up the situation: [2]

"To give an exact definition of what one means by romanticism, to give anything more than a vague idea of the notion one intends to convey when he uses the word romantic, to give a single definite conception to a reader by the use of the word romance, is impossible."

[1] *The Later Renaissance*, 113. [2] *Evolution of the English Novel*, 120.

The difficulty about realism is not so much ambiguity as the question of its very existence. This, however, need not concern us here, as there is no question of its nonexistence in Victorian fiction. Whether or not pure unadulterated realism is a myth was to the Victorians a postulate of no moment, for they had no use for it in any case. No stage of theirs would ever be set for a *Madame Bovary* or an *Old Wives' Tale*. But while they looked upon their art as akin to painting rather than photography, they prided themselves on their fidelity to human character and the great truths of human life. To them the romantic meant the fantastic and incredible, while the realistic signified the sane and sober, the possible if not the actual; and in this sense we use the terms.

To these two divisions, it is necessary to add a third as a sort of *tertium quid*, for the ironic method is important enough to deserve some special treatment, although not correlative with the others. It is conscious indeed of its aristocratic superiority to them, although it cannot maintain itself independently but must be allied to one or the other.

Of the dozen names on the roll of Victorian satiric novelists about half are found in the list of the romantico-satirical. They seem to come in pairs, and for the sake of symmetry and clearness may be so grouped. The first pair are the most distinguished contributors to this section,—Peacock and Butler, standing at the two chronological extremes. The second pair furnish a medium amount, and are themselves forerunners to the main group, though their fantastic productions are forty years apart,—Lytton and Disraeli. The third pair are of least account here, but are of especial importance in the realistic field,—Thackeray and Meredith.

Altogether this half dozen men produced nearly two dozen items of the romantico-satiric order, none of which could be called novels in the strict sense, yet all of which are worthy of being included in this list, because of the light they throw on the characteristics of the romantic method in satire. The largest amount, both actually and relatively, is supplied by Peacock, for his seven tales represent the bulk of his own output. The smallest is Lytton's, represented by only one, and that an aftermath of a prolific and versatile energy. Disraeli threw off three skits, like Thackeray's half dozen and Meredith's two, in being preliminary to later and more substantial work. Butler's two, on the contrary, though forming only a fraction of his stops of various quills, are the most inevitably associated with his name, the pair indeed whereby his name is known.

The list covers a period of eighty-five years, though it is prolonged over a half century only by the interval of thirty years between *Erewhon* and its sequel. The rest are fairly compact, except for Peacock's Rip Van Winkle sleep between *Crochet Castle* and *Gryll Grange*. A dated table is appended for the convenience of a bird's-eye view.[1]

[1] 1816 *Headlong Hall*
1817 *Melincourt* (also *Northanger Abbey*)
1818 *Nightmare Abbey*
1822 *Maid Marian*
1828 *The Voyage of Captain Popanilla*
1829 *The Misfortunes of Elphin*
1831 *Crochet Castle*
1833 *Ixion*, and *The Infernal Marriage*
1839 *Catherine*
1841 *The Yellowplush Papers*
1845 *The Legend of the Rhine*
1847 *Novels by Eminent Hands*
1849 *The Great Hoggarty Diamond*
1850 *Rebecca and Rowena*

Returning now to our first parallel, Peacock and Butler, we find the parallelism to be rather complete, manifesting itself in character, destiny, and product.

The destiny of both lay in a mean that was not golden. Their annals were the long and simple of the fairly well to do. Neither knew the exhilaration that comes from prosperity and downright good luck; neither, the depression of bitter struggle or disaster. The current of Peacock's progress was retarded by the comparative poverty that, like Tennyson's, postponed his marriage; and that of Butler was obstructed by his family's opposition to his unpardonable preference for a secular career. If the son of a clergyman and the grandson of a bishop could not see his clerical duty and do it, there was no help for it, he must go to New Zealand. But to banish a youthful radical was only to set him free; and to allow him a perspective and a fresh viewpoint was to bring down upon orthodoxy an infinite deal of mischief. "It was the England that he saw with new eyes," says his biographer Harris, "after his return, that awakened his restless, satiric vigour. He reacted to the English scene as no one else in his century had reacted before." [1]

By temperament Peacock and Butler were both solitary, pervaded by a gentle melancholy, and permeated with love of classic lore. But Peacock's sadness could take the ironic Jonsonian turn. Quite appropriately did he choose "Your

1855 *The Rose and the Ring*
1856 *The Shaving of Shagpat*
1857 *Farina*
1861 *Gryll Grange*
1871 *The Coming Race*
1872 *Erewhon*
1901 *Erewhon Revisited*

[1] *Samuel Butler, Author of Erewhon*, 65.

true melancholy breeds your perfect fine wit," as the motto for *Nightmare Abbey*. Butler's persiflage, however, covers a more real and permanent pessimism, perhaps because it is directed against the spectacle of the wilfully blind leading the born blind, rather than against a lot of "sentimentalists, chasers after novelty, bilious malcontents." [1]

As was natural, neither was acclaimed by the populace, and neither cared. Peacock had little concern for the British public, which might like him or not, as it pleased; and Butler was content to write for the coming generation, in whose appreciation he placed a not unjustified confidence. Both could afford to publish at their own expense and were willing to do so.

But in spite of their apparent detachment from local affairs, and preoccupation with the past, perhaps indeed for that very reason, these two thoughtful scholars were able to observe their environment keenly and judge it shrewdly. It was the total environment that interested each one, his own *Zeitgeist*, of which neither approved. Peacock rebelled against the futile ferment and restless experimenting of the first half of the century; Butler protested against the torpid acquiescence and smug complacency of the second.

These attitudes represent the chief contrast between them. Peacock was a calm soul, caught in a vortex. He could not be expected to like it. Butler was a speculative one, pent in a self-satisfied halcyon. He could not like that. What each would have been if exchanged in time with the other, it were idle to guess. But it was no irony of fate that made it the congenial mission of one to

[1] Draper: *Social Satire of Thomas Love Peacock.* Modern Language Notes, XXXIV, 1.

banter his age into calming down, and of the other to prick his into waking up.

An additional difference, and the main one, is that Butler is the bigger man in every way more searching and earnest, more constructive, more versatile, more profound. An additional resemblance is that their fiction is so entirely in the romantic field [1] that they alone of all on this list will not come up for consideration when we reach the other.

Peacock's novels [2] form probably the most monomorphic little group to be found in literature. His seven fantasies have the strong family resemblance of the seven vestal maidens in *Gryll Grange*. Six of the Pleiades appeared in a compact series within a fifteen-year period; and the apparently lost sister joined the constellation thirty years later than the latest preceding one.

Two of them, *Maid Marian* and *The Misfortunes of Elphin*, are in historic costume, and thus afford a chance for the inverted satire that comes from a contrast between past and present, not to the advantage of the latter. The other five are all domiciled in contemporary English house parties; in Hall, Court, Abbey, Castle, or Grange. These are not, however, the habitations of the conven-

[1] With the exception of *The Way of All Flesh;* another instance of Butler's wider range.

[2] The word *novel* must of course be stretched if it is to include this set of fantastic fiction. But that is easily done by accepting Chesterton's dictum: "Now in the sense in which there is such a thing as an epic, in that sense there is no such thing as a novel." *Charles Dickens*, 114.

The other alternative is the one taken by Mrs. Oliphant: "We use the word adventurer advisedly, for we cannot regard Peacock's entry into the field of fiction as by any means an authorized one. One cannot help feeling that he did not want to write novels, but that he found that he could not get at the public in any other way; * * * The consequence is that his novels are not novels in the proper sense of the word." *Victorian Age of English Literature*, 16.

Cf. Shaw, of whose dramas a similar statement might be made.

tional citizen. They are "Headlong," "Nightmare," "Crochet." They harbor all sorts of whimsies and fads. Those assembled dine, drink, and talk. Between meals they have a few adventures, not recounted for their own sake, but that of the additional talk they will bring forth.[1] Though the repartee of these dramatized Imaginary Conversations is always at concert pitch, it harmonizes with the whimsically theatrical setting; and the *toute ensemble* edifies while it sparkles, like a set of fireworks displaying maxims of intellectual wit as they explode.

The characters themselves wear their very names as satiric labels. Mr. Feathernest, Mr. Dross, Mrs. Pinmoney, the Honorable Mr. Listless, Sir Oliver Oilcake, the Reverends Gaster, Grovelgrub, Vorax, are ticketed after the fashion inherited from the Morality Plays, a device that distills a quaint mediæval odor on the nineteenth-century air, and persists only in some of Trollope's minor characters.

Of all these people exploiting all their "humours" Peacock is the ever amused spectator. He speaks ironically through the voice of the artlessly ambitious Squire Crochet: [2]

> "The sentimental against the rational, the intuitive against the inductive, the ornamental against the useful, the intense against the tranquil, the romantic against the classical; these are great and interesting controversies, which I should like, before I die, to see satisfactorily settled."

It is because of this effect of inconsequent raillery, doubtless, that Peacock appears to lack humanity,[3] and

[1] "The desideratum of a Peacockian character is that he shall be able to talk." Freeman: *Life and Novels of Peacock*, 233.

[2] *Crochet Castle*, 35.

[3] "He has knowledge, wit, humour, technical skill, cleverness in abundance,

to laugh without responsibility.[1] But one feels that such criticisms would not have ruffled the twinkling serenity of his placid spirit; that he would not have deplored the loss of power nor demurred at the penalty. He was a born sportsman. The hunting was good. Pleasure to him was in pursuit more than possession. Having had the fun, he would willingly give away his bag of game before he went home.

One turns with an especial interest to the belated *Gryll Grange* to see what change there may be thirty years after, but finds little more than the natural mellowing influence of time. He is indeed "satirist to the last," albeit he is disposed to use "more oil and less vinegar." [2]

If Peacock is Horatian, without the Roman's sense of realism, Butler is more of a Juvenal, as the latter might have been, perhaps, had he lived under Victoria instead of Domitian. The wind of invective is now tempered, not to the shorn lamb, but to the modern prejudice against the rudeness of tempests unmitigated by sunshine.

Butler's publications, beginning two years after Pea-

some genius, he is a keen observer, a caustic critic. What he lacks is humanity, just that which is the essence of the greatness of the great humourists—Cervantes, Rabelais, Shakespeare." Walker: *Lit. of the Victorian Era*, 618. (He explains that humanity in work is meant, not of character.)

[1] "But because he laughed without responsibility he belongs less with the writers of power than with those of whom laughter has exacted a great, as of all laughter exacts a certain, penalty." Van Doren, *Life of Peacock*, 281.

(One could wish the nature of this "penalty" had been elucidated a bit, instead of being entirely taken for granted. In any case, it must be largely subjective, and therefore a thing which exists only by being felt.)

[2] The phrases are Van Doren's and Walker's respectively. Cf. Garnett:

"It cannot be said that the satire of *Gryll Grange* is very Archilochian. The author has lost the power of raising a laugh at the objects of his dislike, and merely assails them with a genial pugnacity, so open, honest, and hearty as inevitably to conciliate a certain measure of sympathy." *Introduction.*

cock's had ended,[1] extended through the next half century, *The Way of All Flesh* and *Notebooks* being posthumous. But the three decades bracketed by the two Erewhons were the fertile ones. Through them flowed steadily a stream of many currents; satiric, scientific (mainly controversial), classic, critical, descriptive, expository, musical, and artistic. Of all these volumes only three can be classed as fiction, and one of those falls in the other group. Our present interest centers upon *Erewhon* and its sequel.

There is no more effective satiric machinery than that of the Foreign State, or Adventures among Strange People. It may take the form of a serious though perhaps fantastic conception with incidental satire, as in *Utopia, New Atlantis, The Coming Race, Modern Utopia;* or a travesty of these, an inverted pyramid, made grotesque by the dominating satire, though none the less freighted with serious intent, as *Gulliver, Journey from This World to the Next, Erewhon.*

From the fact that *The Coming Race* and *Erewhon* may be cited as examples of the same literary genus, though of different species, comes the suggestion that the real complement of Butler is Lytton. It does happen that they furnish the only two instances on our list of the exercise of this particular kind of creative fancy.[2] Lytton's tale pictures a positive ideal, which satirizes our inadequate reality by acting as a foil to it. Butler's narrative portrays a supposed reality, of which the visitor does not approve; and his comments satirize our accepted reality

[1] With *The First Canterbury Settlement,* in 1863.

[2] The coincidence that gave the public *The Coming Race* in 1871, and *Erewhon* in 1872 brought the charge of a possible plagiarism in the latter. If the absurd notion that Butler needed any light borrowed from Lytton, is worth expelling, Butler's own candid statement about it should be sufficient for the purpose.

by a subtle, indirect reflection. Our race placed beside the "coming" one merely looks small, inferior, incomplete, yet all it needs is growth. But if the barrier could be leveled between our country and the one Over the Range, the two would confront each other and see their own images, not as in a glass darkly but as in a brilliant yet tricky and distorting mirror. Our actual beliefs and practices, shorn of the verbal illusions we have spun around them, and pushed to their logical conclusions, would become the naked *reductio ad absurdum* we view in the Erewhonian philosophy of illness, crime, science, religion, life, and death.[1]

In *Erewhon Revisited* we see a mental sequence even more interesting than the dramatic sequel. *Erewhon* was followed the very next year by *The Fair Haven*. The former supplies the stage setting, the latter the central idea, whose combination makes the Revisit a seemingly artless but really astounding *tour de force*, an uncanny offspring of logic and fancy.

Given the original situation and the climax that closes the Erewhonian adventure, given considerable study and meditation on the strange, enshrouded origin of the religion which possessed the author's part of the world, given a speculative dream as to what might have happened in his fabricated autobiography after the event, given the Butlerian mind, patient to track and quick to spring, and the result is as inevitable as a theorem. One scent, and the proficient hound is off, literally hot on the trail, nor does he halt till Hanky and Panky, the credulous

[1] Cannan says of *Erewhon*, "Few good books have so many faults, and yet it remains the one enduring satire of the nineteenth century." *Samuel Butler*, 32. (Whether the *of* means *directed against* or *produced by*, the verdict is undoubtedly valid.)

mob, Sunchildism itself, are fairly run down and given a good fright, though finally let off with a shaking that leaves them limp.

The dramatic canvas on which this satiric design is drawn is worthy a Cervantes, a Swift, or a Defoe; a beautiful example of the "grave, impossible, great lie," absorbing if not convincing. Butler's stories, more than any in this group, show constructive art; length that is enough and not too much, sufficient swiftness, coherence, and climax. They are fanstatic but not flimsy. The imagination is captivated, as always, by the introduction to a strange, new land; the intellect is aroused by the significance of the panorama rapidly unfolding; the imp of mischief that dwells in all normal human hearts is delighted at the deft overthrow of certain conventional idols, now shown to be ugly, inane, and clay from the feet up; and all this through a concrete, realistic medium that can be visualized and lived in. We share the excitement of finding and crossing the range, of the capture and imprisonment of the "foreign devil" who is at least a dare-devil, of his later success, and astounding elopement. We sympathize with Mr. Nosnibor, voluntarily fined and flogged; and we feel quite at home in the Musical Banks and the Law Courts.

In the sequel we renew old acquaintances and make some new ones. We admire the executive ability of Yram, seconded by that of her able son George. We participate in the suspense at the Dedication Ceremony, are relieved after the dinner table council, and finally well satisfied when the Bridgeport schemers are discomfited but nobody Blue-Pooled.

It is the business of the *raconteur*, romantic as well as realistic, to beguile his audience into acquiescence even of

the incredible. But the romancing satirist has the anomalous task of creating a story good enough to be its own reward and then not allowing it to be. It must have all the air of being an end in itself the while it is being made the means to another end. This adroit manipulation whereby the idea appears subordinate to the plot, although the reverse is the case, is a point in which Butler surpasses the others on our list and ranks with the highest at large.[1]

But the idea itself was a premature blossom, and the winds of March, though late Victorian, were ruthless. About that time, however, it was the much more massive figure of Ibsen that happened to stand in the main current of the blasts, and Butler was merely blown aside and left until Shaw and the Twentieth Century came along and picked him up. One of his recent biographers has a serious time trying to establish him as the laws of chronology would dictate, and finally decides it cannot be done:[2]

"How is it possible to fit a man like Butler, * * * into any system, * * * how are we to classify one who, above

[1] One's astonishment that it was Meredith who had the honor of rejecting the manuscript of *Erewhon*, submitted to Chapman and Hall, is exceeded only by the astonishment at the reason given,—that it was a philosophical treatise, not likely to interest the general public. One would hardly accuse this critic of a conservative reluctance to expose the public to iconoclastic bacilli, though he had not yet become the author of *Beauchamp's Career*, nor would one suppose his "public" to be composed entirely of tired business men and sentimental school girls. There remain the two cruxes in the history of satire: failure of the satirist Thackeray to appreciate the satirist Swift, and of the satirist Meredith to appreciate the satirist Butler. If they prove anything it is the diversity among satirists.

[2] Harris: *Samuel Butler, Author of Erewhon*, 13.

Cf. Chesterton's whimsical remark that "the best definition of the Victorian Age is that Francis Thompson stood outside it."

all others, belonged to no school, was traceable, it may fairly be said, to no influence at all *direct* in character, looking back to, and fitting in with, none of those particular habits of thought at any rate in the age just preceding and merging into his own? On an external view, of course, it might be maintained that Butler harmonized with the solid, scientific background of Victorian thought—harmonized with it, yet was not of it. Again * * * one might quite easily say that Samuel Butler stood outside the Victorian system. And this would be the truest description of him."

The parallel noted above between the next two on the list, Lytton and Disraeli, is more applicable to their work in the realistic field than in this, for the reason already stated, that Lytton's one contribution, *The Coming Race*, is more akin to Butler's, both in date and design.

Accident rather then enterprise led to the discovery of Lytton's Utopian people, the Vril-ya, for they inhabit the concave inner surface of our own planet, and are to be reached only through a subterranean chasm leading down from the depths of a mine. The citizens of this highly cultivated nation regard the English intruder as a primitive barbarian, and despise him for his ignorance and his crude, carnivorous habits. Deciding, however, to spare his life and risk his presence until proved contaminating and pernicious, they proceed to educate him by means of the Vril Trance, a sort of telepathic radio-activity. The process is mutual, except that they accomplish more,—"partly because my language was much simpler than theirs, comprising far less of complex ideas; and partly because their organization was, by hereditary culture, much more ductile, and more readily capable of acquiring knowledge than mine." [1]

[1] *The Coming Race*, 47.

Being adopted, the invader is treated with indulgent condescension, nicknamed *Tish*, a froglet, (in allusion to the Great Batrachian Theory, that humans sprang from frogs, or, according to one branch of the school, degenerated from them), and allowed to roam around with a child, who is about his equal in intellect. All goes well until the politely tolerated guest has the temerity to fall in love with a native maiden. This means death, by the painless Vril method (a marvelous application of electricity), in order to prevent the disgrace of so uneugenic an alliance; and the calamity is averted only by the skill and resourcefulness of the lady herself, who manages to return the unwelcome wooer to his native outer clime. This is made possible through the use of wings, another invention of this advanced people.[1]

The story has considerable picturesqueness, nor does it fail in point. The *Modern Utopia* of Wells is anticipated in the emphasis on sanitation and material welfare. As in *Looking Backward*, crime is eliminated through the elimination of poverty and disease. The dramatic conclusion is that this underground people are to be the coming race, against whom we must be prepared if we would not by them be conquered and exterminated. The philosophical conclusion, however, is the old paradox, the inescapable dilemma of stagnant perfection.[2]

[1] Women were the wooers and choosers in this feministic community, but the problem of feminism was apparently solved by the practice of voluntary relinquishment of wings, by the feminine wearers, after marriage, and a strict devotion to the domestic life.

[2] "And where a society attains to a moral standard in which there are no crimes and no sorrows from which tragedy can extract its aliment of pity and sorrow, no salient vices or follies on which comedy can lavish its mirthful satire, it has lost its chance of producing a Shakespeare, a Molière, or a Mrs. Beecher Stowe." *The Coming Race*, 230.

Disraeli's *Popanilla* was a *jeu d'esprit* of his youth, and develops an opposite situation from that of the preceding. Instead of the Britisher abroad, he pictures the foreigner in England, thus affording us a chance to see ourselves as others see us.[1]

The mechanism by which this new scrutiny is brought to bear upon our old establishments is well worn and familiar, but has some novelty in the application. A sailor's chest is washed ashore on a remote island, and found by one of the aborigines, Popanilla, who becomes inoculated with ambition through perusal of some documents discovered therein. He immediately organizes a proselyting campaign, but encounters too much opposition from a recalcitrant public to make much headway. The people are well content with their present peaceful existence, and quite averse to receiving the serpent of aspiration in their idyllic though socially sophisticated Garden of Eden. They are provokingly obtuse even to the argument that "they might reasonably expect to be the terror and astonishment of the universe, and to be able to annoy every nation of any consequence." [2] Finally to settle the trouble caused by the convert's tactless propaganda, which has had the lamentable effect of inducing the young men to desert society for politics, the king orders the disturber of the peace to be set adrift, and bids him farewell with this encouraging prophecy: [3]

"As the axiom of your school seems to be that everything can be made perfect at once, without time, without experience,

[1] After the manner of Defoe's *Turkish Merchant: the Conduct of Christians Made the Sport of Infidels*, and others of this type.

[2] *Popanilla*, 380. The ensuing debate is made the peg for some vivacious burlesque on Parliamentary speeches.

[3] *Ibid.*, 385.

without practice, and without preparation, I have no doubt, with the aid of a treatise or two, you will make a consummate naval commander, although you have never been at sea in the whole course of your life."

This is not exactly the destiny of the involuntary voyager, but his luck is good. In due time he lands on the shores of Vraibleusia, and forthwith meets Mr. Skindeep, an instantaneous guide and friend, if not a philosopher, whom he accompanies with implicit trust, "for, having now known him nearly half a day, his confidence in his honour and integrity was naturally unbounded." [1]

As Popanilla becomes introduced to the best people of Hubbadub, the capital, the resources of his own country arouse interest, and an expedition of vast commercial enterprise is headed for the Isle of Fantaisie. Failure to find it precipitates a panic and leads to the imprisonment of its representative, for exciting hopes under false pretenses. However, a happy ending is secured by a legal *coup d'êtat*, and a solution of all problems announced by Mr. Flummery Flam, who has discovered that "it was the great object of a nation not to be the most powerful, or the richest, or the best, or the wisest, but to be the most Flummery-Flammistical." [2]

In Disraeli's two little classical burlesques, published five years after *Popanilla*, still another device is used. There is neither an Englishman in Italy, nor an Italian in England, but the ancient stage of Greek mythology is made the background for a thinly disguised modern satiric drama. Familiar characters and incidents are seen masquerading in equally familiar costumes and scenes, but the former are local and current, and the latter revived from a far past.

[1] *Popanilla*, 394. [2] *Ibid.*, 459. The whole is in ridicule of Utilitarianism.

There is none of Browning's seriousness in Disraeli's interpretation of Ixion. His story is utilized because it offers tempting chances for saucy, allusive comment on mundane affairs. A journey through space inevitably suggests the humor of proportion; but Ixion and Mercury give us not the grave irony of Byron's Cain and Lucifer, nor the rollicking yet pensive mirth of Mark Twain's Captain Stormfield. They are content with clever jocularity.

For instance, as they graze a certain star, Ixion inquires who live there. "Some low people who are trying to shine into notice," is the haughty reply. " 'Tis a parvenu planet, and only sprung into space within this century. We do not visit them." [1]

During his brief but splendid sojourn on Olympus the guest is postured as a complacent, insolent, Barry Lyndon sort of rascal, who makes himself perfectly at home in the divine dining and drawing rooms (which are, of course, conducted according to the British code of etiquette), fulfills Cupid's prediction that he will write in Minerva's album, though he does manage to escape her "Platonic mantrap," carries on his intrigue with the Queen of Heaven in the Don Juan manner, and meets his detection and punishment with supercilious assurance and a final triumphant taunt.

The Infernal Marriage of Proserpine to Pluto introduces a disturbing element into the *ancien régime* of Hades. The new and influential bride stirs up a terrible political turmoil by interfering in the matter of Orpheus and Eurydice, and the consequence is quite disastrous. The conservative Fates and Furies are so incensed that they neglect their disciplinary duties, whereby the radical Sisyphus, Tantalus, and Ixion obtain a respite from torture and a

[1] *Ixion*, 272.

dangerous opportunity to talk politics. The phrases "Ministry Out," "Formation of New Cabinet," are bandied about. Finally a change of scene is prescribed for the Queen. Her departure is celebrated by an elaborate banquet and a magnificent procession,[1] and we left to infer that the future belongs to the reactionaries.

We, however, follow the fortunes of Proserpine, who dwells for a season in Elysium, after a visit *en route* to the dethroned Saturn, who discusses with her The Spirit of the Age. Elysian society is of course the English of Disraeli's set; gay, graceful, complacent, and malicious. The finest gentleman there is Achilles; the worst cad is Æneas, who would fain make up with the now popular Dido, but being repulsed, must content himself with becoming head of the Elysian saints and president of a society to induce Gnomes [2] to drink only water.

In form these last two productions belong to the general division of burlesque. There are also touches of travesty in Peacock.[3] But the main instances of this type of the grotesque are found in the two writers who filled in this line the interval betwen the last of Disraeli's, in 1833, and the last of Peacock's, in 1861. During the forties and first half of the fifties stood Thackeray, monopolist of parody and caricature. Immediately following came the two contributions of Meredith to satiric persiflage. In both cases this fantastic stuff formed the preliminary to the real work, being merely the romantic avenue by which two of the greatest realistic satirists came into their own kingdom.

It happens, therefore, that though the quantity of this

[1] A prominent feature of this is a white ass (the Public) which the prime minister leads by the nose.

[2] The laborers.

[3] These two are alike in their handling of sparkling dialogue.

early product is sizable enough, its rank is comparatively low. It is overshadowed by the others on the list because in it the fun and nonsense is predominant and the critical element so slight as to be negligible; and it is overshadowed still more by the more mature genius of the authors themselves.

It is natural that the burlesque should have been a favorite satiric mode from Aristophanes to Rostand and Shaw. The wit it requires is imitative rather than creative, and its appeal is instantaneous.

It is also natural that it should manifest itself at the beginning of a writer's career, and form a prelude to greater achievement. This is the case for good and sufficient psychological reasons. In youth the exuberant and undisciplined spirit, not yet checked by the reins of reality, riots in the glory of extravagance; the inventive faculty is awake but unfurnished by experience with material for original creation; the critical scent is keen but unpracticed, and impatient of sober, qualified judgment.[1] Such a condition is prime for the production of a *Love's Labour's Lost*, a *Joseph Andrews*, a *Northanger Abbey*, a *Pickwick*, a *Barry Lyndon*, a *Shaving of Shagpat;* to be followed by *Twelfth Night*, *Tom Jones*, *Emma*, *David Copperfield*, *Vanity Fair*, *The Egoist.*

Thackeray's apprenticeship at this desk was rather

[1] Walker's dictum (*Victorian Literature*, 700) that "Good burlesque is impossible except through sound criticism," is an instance of the dangerous half truth. The sounder the criticism the better the burlesque, to be sure, but only as *criticism:* as *burlesque* it may be highly successful in spite of some critical unsoundness. Indeed, it must necessarily contain the element of injustice that inheres in all exaggeration,—the very foundation of burlesque and caricature.

Moreover, Walker's conception of the burlesque is indicated when he calls *Rebecca and Rowena* "perhaps the best burlesque ever penned." As a matter of fact, it is not only far from that preëminence, but it is in form actually less of a burlesque than most of the others under consideration.

unduly prolonged, covering about half the period of his literary activity; and its output is difficult to segregate on account of the ambiguous description of much of his early work. But from the large mass of sketches, essays, skits, stories, perhaps half a dozen may be selected as being fairly within the limits of satirico-romance.

Two of them, the *Hoggarty Diamond* and the *Yellowplush Papers*, are on the border line, included here only because too exaggerated and irresponsible to be otherwise classed. The same might be said of *Barry Lyndon*, which is not far from being a real novel. Yet perhaps none of these are more "grotesque" than some phases of legitimate fiction. Much of their humor comes from the dramatic monologue device. Five are roughly definable as burlesques: three—*Catherine*, *A Legend of the Rhine*, and *The Rose and the Ring*, of types; the other two, *Novels by Eminent Hands*, and *Rebecca and Rowena*, of individuals; yet here again, classification is misleading, as these latter are versus the *forms* of certain productions rather than their *authors*.

Meredith's *Farina* is an interesting companion piece to Thackeray's Rhine Legend, both having a Teutonic and chivalric background, and one might perhaps find a closer parallel there than in the one chosen by Moffat, who traces "reminiscences of Peacock in the fantastic element which occasionally crops up," in Meredith, and points out that the idea underlying *Farina* and *Maid Marian* is "substantially the same—an attempt to reproduce with gentle satire, the medieval romance of sentiment and gay adventure." It is true, however, that *A Legend of the Rhine* differs from both these in its mocking parade of anachronisms and telescoped chronology. It was "many, many hundred thousand years ago" that

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Thackeray's German knight was pricking o'er the plain, but it was in the time of Richard the Lion-Hearted, and "on the cold and rainy evening of Thursday, the twenty-sixth of October." In addition to his full armor he was equipped with an oiled silk umbrella and a bag with a brazen padlock.

On a subsequent adventure he halts at a wayside shrine covered with "odoriferous cactuses and silvery magnolias," and recites "a censer, an ave, and a couple of acolytes before it." A victim of his mighty lance wishes for a notary-public to take down his dying deposition. And a lost champion is advertised for in the *Allgemeine Zeitung*.

The Shaving of Shagpat out-Herods Herod in Arabian Nightism, and is not devoid of satiric pith, but we are expressly forbidden by the author himself to allegorize his geyser of ebullient mirth. The humor is Rabelaisian—or American—in its pure love of size; it floats in a gigantic, inflated balloon, to which a small basket of mental cargo is attached. In this, however, is wrapped up the very important secret that continuous laughter releases one from enchantment and restores one's true form.

The romantic satirist must have, like any other compound, certain more or less inconsistent traits. There must be the inventive wit of romance plus the shrewd logic of satire. Yet this rare combination does not insure the best satiric results. Indeed the contrary is more likely to be the case, as the union at best is somewhat adventitious.

Then, too, there must be a degree of exaggeration, with the strain on our credulity so evenly distributed that it is not felt. The sound sense that satire calls for [1] must

[1] "Heroes and gods make other poems fine;
Plain Satire calls for *sense* in every line." Young: *Universal Passion.*

maintain her operations, the while she is masquerading as arrant nonsense.

Finally there is the dilemma encountered by the dramatist,—the necessity of concentrating high lights as life never does, yet preserving sufficient effect of dullness and vapid inanity to simulate reality as we know it.

The various kinds of artifice employed in this artificial process are all found in the examples on our list. Remoteness of time lends illusion to *Maid Marian*, *Legend of the Rhine*, *Farina;* remoteness of place, to *The Coming Race*, and the Erewhons; non-human characters, to *Melincourt*, *Ixion*, *Shaving of Shagpat;* anomalous situations, to *Misfortunes of Elphin* and *Popanilla*. Some are able to combine them all, notably Lytton and Butler.[1] Some, on the other hand, manage to create a maximum impression with a minimum use of the spectacular.

Peacock, for instance, never leaves England nor gives us any but English characters, quiet if not actually subdued, and usually unexceptionable in behavior. Disraeli is really as circumscribed. He apparently transports us to Heaven, Hades, some unsuspected isle in the far seas, but he actually conveys all these to the isle where he was born. Thackeray and even Meredith keep strictly to *terra firma*.

If it were desirable to make comparisons with a view

[1] In one of Lytton's first volumes is an observation interesting as perhaps the germ from which the plan of *The Coming Race* was developed.

Vincent, the philosopher of the story, remarks. (*Pelham*, 57):

"There are few better satires on a civilized country than the observations of visitors less polished; while, on the contrary, the civilized traveller, in describing the manners of the American barbarians, instead of conveying ridicule upon the visited, points the sarcasm on the visitor; and Tacitus could not have thought of a finer or nobler satire on the Roman luxuries than that insinuated by his treatise on the German simplicity."

to determining whether any particular ingredient made for success in this sort, we might observe the connection between originality and exaggeration in their relation to effectiveness. Evidence from the data seems to indicate that satiric value, estimated by weight and pertinence of ideas, is in direct proportion to the amount of inventive wit; but in irregular or even inverse ratio to extravaganza or caricature.

For example, the general order of both satiric and constructive excellence, is approximately as follows,—listed in an ascending series: Meredith, Thackeray, Lytton, Disraeli, Peacock, Butler. But to reach a climax of pure fantasy we would pass from Thackeray through Peacock, Disraeli, Butler, and Lytton, to Meredith. Exaggeration does not seem, therefore, to inhere in satire though it may enhance it.

The chief advantage of the fantastic is that it gives unfettered play to whatever fancy the mind is endowed with; and it enlists a naturally too serious Criticism under the brilliant banner of Wit. That its attractions are many is proved by its distinguished history; for enrolled among the members of this versatile society are such names as *Reynard the Fox*, *Romance of the Rose*, *Piers Plowman*, *Don Quixote*, *Dunciad*, *Gulliver*, *Don Juan*.

Few on our list deserve comparison with these; none perhaps except *Erewhon*. Peacock's name might have a place, not for any one tale but for the *toute ensemble*. What one of Disraeli's biographers [1] says of *Popanilla*, that it is "a work of the same kind as Swift's *Gulliver's*

[1] Mill: *Disraeli, the Author, Orator, and Statesman*, 20.

He adds,—"although we cannot claim for it the merit of that matchless production, still, regarding it as a work of a very young man, it is to our thinking one of infinite promise."

Travels" is true enough, but would be more to the point if the Travels had been confined to Laputa.

Not only are our modern instances comparatively light in quality, but restricted in range. The fable, for example, is not represented at all, nor the allegory, though both forms have had a sort of revival in even more recent times. These deficiencies, if such they are, are easily accounted for by the fact that in the nineteenth century realism (in the liberal sense) was having its day, that it had taken especial possession of the Victorian novel, particularly in its satiric aspect, so that such scattered fantasies as we have may be regarded as the crumbs from an opulent table.

The marks of the satiric extravaganza are wit, invention, and exaggeration, In a general way the opposites of these may be called respectively humor, interpretation, and exposure; and it may be premised that these last will be found the characteristics of satiric realism.

Another contrast that may be anticipated is that when romance is used as a satiric vehicle it is built expressly for that purpose and carries its passenger in solitary state; while realism is a public carry-all, in which this fare is allowed a place along with the others.

Whether further generalization as to relative effectiveness is possible is a question that must be deferred until after the discussion of the complementary type.

CHAPTER II

THE REALISTIC

Realism in Victorian fiction, as we need only to be reminded, means not strictly that which is, but liberally that which might be. Its field is nominally the Actual but it encroaches unhesitatingly on the domain of the Probable, laps over into the Improbable, and barely halts at the Impossible. These expansive habits make it not incompatible with the Romantic, which indeed, in its soberer aspects, is a constant factor in the English novel up to and including this period.

Romanticism is reduced to a minimum by Maria Edgeworth, Jane Austen, Mrs. Gaskell, and Anthony Trollope,[1] but the majority of our novelists have not been thus content to present life in its everyday garb, neat and prosperous enough, it may be, but neutral, inane, diffuse, inconclusive. They have insisted in the name of decorum and dignity on the dress costume and company manners which in civilized society are a prerequisite to public appearance and conspicuous position. Life is still life and not an impostor, even when robed in its best with some artifice of color and ornament and some evidence of decisive purposefulness in mien and bearing.

[1] Perhaps pardon should be asked on behalf of the irresponsible Circumstance which allowed so large a preponderance in this matter to the sex notoriously romantic, flighty, ignorant of real life, and impatient of its prose and drudgery. As to the one man, Bryce remarks, in his *Studies in Contemporary Biography*, "But whoever does read Trollope in 1930 will gather from his pages better than from any others an impression of what everyday life was like in England in the 'middle Victorian' period."

But however romantic in effect, the nineteenth-century novel was realistic in intent, and we may in a measure take the will for the deed. Of this devotion to reality we have several testimonies, from such important witnesses as Trollope, Dickens, Thackeray; but two are of especial interest as they come from two of the most undeniable romanticists, Lytton and Brontë.

In her Preface to the belated edition of *The Professor*, Charlotte Brontë declared her own preference for a depiction of a normal and unadorned existence to be thwarted by the lack of editorial enthusiasm. After stating the condition of things she adds—

"* * * the publishers in general scarcely approved of this system, but would have liked something more imaginative and poetical—something more consonant with a highly wrought fancy, with a taste for pathos, with sentiments more tender, elevated, unworldly. Indeed, until an author has tried to dispose of a manuscript of this kind he can never know what stores of romance and sensibility lie hidden in breasts he would not have suspected of casketing such treasures."

An accurate description of Victorianism is contained in this ironic indictment, and perhaps also an explanation of the romantic trend of its realism on the ground of the law of supply and demand as well as that of natural propensity.

Lytton prided himself prodigiously on his true rendering of life, though of his two dozen novels, *The Caxtons* alone approaches the realistic type, and pictures in one of his heroes [1] a phase at least of his artistic ideal:

"The humblest alley in a crowded town had something poetical for him; he was ever ready to mix in a crowd, if it were

[1] *Ernest Maltravers*, 32. Cf. *How It Strikes a Contemporary.*

only gathered round a barrel-organ or a dog fight, and listen to all that was said, and notice all that was done. And this I take to be the true poetical temperament essential to every artist who aspires to be something more than a scene-painter."

That the satirical element in this romantico-realistic form of fiction should be characterized by humor, exposure, and comparative rarity, instead of wit, exaggeration, and ubiquity, is inevitable, since the former qualities accord not only with realism but with one another.

Humor is the comic sense which is amused by things as they are, whereas wit either creates the absurdity or ferrets it out of obscurity. Hence the former is allied to the actual more than to the fanciful, and uses the method of simple disclosure rather than caricature. While therefore the imaginative energy of wit is dynamic, that of humor is more quiescent, being sufficiently exercised by its function of interpretation, of showing wherein lurks the spirit of the laughable, however grave and solemn the appearance to the unseeing eye.

Where the quality of the satire is of this realistic order, the quantity must necessarily be restricted and more or less incidental rather than dominant; subdued, not rampant. For the true satirical humorist, seeing life steadily and whole, observes that while certain parts of it are unquestionably absurd, whether flauntingly or subtly so, these ludicrous shreds and patches, absolutely integral and ineradicable as they are, are nevertheless only a portion and not so large a one, of the stupendous whole.

Neither that astigmatic visualizer, the cynic, who regards life itself as a huge joke on its victims, nor that myopic spectator, the misanthrope, who conceives humanity as an unmitigated jest on creation, was a Victorian favorite. Both are blind to certain phenomena,—beauty, power,

exquisite delicacy, tremendous strength,—which also exist, which even the pessimist grants to be compensatory, and which, when genuine, are utterly beyond the reach of any ridicule that pretends to sanity or justice. Such then,—humorously truthful and suitably proportioned,—is the general character of the satiric stratum which runs, widening and narrowing, through the great vein of Victorian fiction.

In the legitimate novel there are two main devices of revealing the ludicrous; the direct, whereby the author in his own reflections and comments points it out; and the dramatic, whereby he shows it by means of incident and character. The latter method is again subdivisible into two modes, by the use of the two contrasting types of actors, humorous and humorists. The first are allowed to betray themselves, their very unconsciousness adding to the piquancy of the situation. For this the favorite technical tool is the dramatic monologue. The second are the witty protagonists. They stand *in loco scriptoris* and express that detection of absurdity for which the humorless humorous furnish the occasion.[1]

When we consult our original list, we find the two extremes have been cut off, as Peacock and Butler belong entirely to the other department. The remaining eleven have produced about one hundred twenty novels in the stricter sense, not including short stories, tales, sketches, or burlesques. It must be noted that this restriction rules

[1] These types may be summarized for convenience in a topical outline:

I. Direct.
II. Dramatic.
  1. Situation.
  2. Character.
    a. Witty protagonists.
    b. Comical antagonists.

out some items important as literature, and in certain cases as satire,—*Cranford*, *Pickwick*, *Peg Woffington*, *Scenes from Clerical Life*.

Of the grand total, approximately one-quarter is eliminated as being essentially and thoroughly serious. Here again are found some notable names,—*Last Days of Pompeii*, *Mary Barton*, *Henry Esmond*, *Tale of Two Cities*, *The Cloister and the Hearth*, *Jane Eyre*, *Hypatia*. Three-fourths is a large majority, from which one might deduce that the novel of this period was prevailingly satirical. But the other extreme, those so strongly saturated as to deserve the name of satires, are far fewer than the unsatirical. *Vanity Fair*, *Martin Chuzzlewit*, *The Egoist*, possibly *Barchester Towers*, and *Beauchamp's Career*, practically exhaust the list. This leaves about four score of novels in which the spirit of satire exists, manifesting itself showily, coyly, in wide range and diversity.

When an author uses the direct method for the conveyance of satirical ideas, he becomes for the nonce a didactic, though humor-flavored, philosopher. Over against the artistic liabilities incurred,—interruption of the narrative, intrusion of more or less irrelevant matter, may be placed the intellectual assets,—presentation of opinions and conclusions, and frank expression of personality.

Whether approved of or not, this discursive habit must be accepted as an old inheritance. From the beginning, the English novel has been a hybrid, the drama grafted on the treatise. Even the medieval mind, with its insatiable relish for the pageantry of life, had an uneasy feeling that the Merry Tale should not be entirely its own reward, and accordingly found for it a moral justification, whereby pleasure and profit were joined in a most complacent alliance. And ever since, the prevailing purpose has been

not only to portray life but to exhibit this or that deduction about life.

In the eighteenth century this tendency took definite shape and substance, for then it became notably true that the division between narrative and essay was not coincident with a division between narrators and essayists. Swift, Addison, Defoe, Fielding, Sterne, were both. And it was their mantle and not that of romance writers, Gothic or Historical, that best fitted Victorian shoulders. Of the many testimonies to this, direct and indirect, the following from a characteristic Victorian pen may be cited as evidence: [1]

"The reader of a novel—who had doubtless taken the volume up simply for amusement, and who would probably lay it down did he suspect that instruction, like a snake-in-the-grass, like physic beneath the sugar, was to be imposed upon him—requires from his author chiefly this, that he shall be amused by a narrative in which elevated sentiment prevails, and gratified by being made to feel that the elevated sentiments described are exactly his own."

He then goes on to show that this morality is best served by realism, in spite of the superior attractions of heroes and villains: [2]

"But for one Harry Esmond, there are fifty Ralph Newtons—five hundred and fifty of them; and the very youth whose bosom glows with admiration as he reads of Harry—who exults in the idea that as Harry did, so would he have done—lives as Ralph lived, is less noble, less persistent, less of a man even than was Ralph Newton.

"It is the test of a novel-writer's art that he conceals his snake-in-the-grass; but the reader may be sure that it is always

[1] Trollope: *Ralph the Heir*, 275.

[2] *Ibid.*, 275–276.

there. * * * In writing novels, we novelists preach to you from our pulpits, and are keenly anxious that our sermons shall not be inefficacious. * * * Nevertheless, the faults of a Ralph Newton, and not the vices of a Varney or a Barry Lyndon, are the evils against which men should in these days be taught to guard themselves—which women also should be made to hate. Such is the writer's apology for his very indifferent hero, Ralph the Heir."

In another volume [1] the same writer confesses,—

"Castles with unknown passages are not compatible with my homely muse. I would as lief have to do with a giant in my book—a real giant, such as Goliath—as with a murdering monk with a scowling eye. The age for such delights is, I think, gone. We may say historically of Mrs. Radcliffe's time that there were mysterious sorrows in those days. They are now as much out of date as the giants."

Victorianism of course had her own sorrows, patent and unmysterious as they were. At no time could she have been mistaken for Elizabethanism. But she grew gradually in strength and sobriety, and cast a heavier shadow in the afternoon of the century. In its mid-morning Disraeli could compliment his own *Young Duke* with the subtitle, "a moral tale though gay." And the chief ambition of the young writers up to the early forties seems to have been to produce tales that were gay though moral.

Of this tendency Lytton is the most conspicuous example. Innately serious and thoroughly sentimental, he nevertheless dared not be as solemn as he could. He must live up to the requirement for ironic wit and the light touch of *savior faire*, even though, lacking native exuberance and somewhat deficient in taste, he often fell into

[1] *The Bertrams*, 150.

the slough of facetiousness, or at least lapsed into childish jocularity.

To quote him at his best, however, we take a few excerpts from the last of his trilogy of domestic novels. In the second of the series, *My Novel*, he had adapted the prefatory device of *Tom Jones*, using the remarks of the Caxton family as a sort of introductory (or more properly, retrospective) chorus to each book. In *What Will He Do with It*, the idea is carried out on a smaller scale, in expository paragraphs preliminary to chapters. The following will be sufficient to indicate the tone:

Book I

Chapter XII

"In which it is shown that a man does this or declines to do that for reasons best known to himself—a reserve which is extremely conducive to the social interests of a community; since the conjecture into the origin and nature of those reasons stimulates the inquiring faculties, and furnishes the staple of modern conversation. And as it is not to be denied that, if their neighbors left them nothing to guess at, three fourths of civilized humankind, male or female, would have nothing to talk about; so we cannot too gratefully encourage that needful curiosity, termed by the inconsiderate tittle-tattle or scandal, which saves the vast majority of our species from being reduced to the degraded condition of dumb animals."

Chapter XV

"The historian records the attachment to public business which distinguishes the British Legislator—Touching instance of the regret which ever in patriotic bosoms attends the neglect of a public duty."

Chapter XVII

"* * * It also showeth, for the instruction of Men and States, the connection between democratic opinion and wounded

self-love; so that, if some Liberal statesman desire to rouse against an aristocracy the class just below it, he has only to persuade a fine lady to be exceedingly civil 'to that sort of people.'"

Book IV
Chapter IX

"* * * The aboriginal Man-Eater, or Pocket Cannibal, is susceptible to the refining influences of Civilization. He decorates his lair with the skins of his victims; he adorns his person with the spoils of those whom he devours."

Of the nine remaining names on the list, the real Victorians according to chronology, it happens that two-thirds are almost negative examples of direct satire. Reade, Trollope, and Kingsley take their own moralizing for the most part seriously, as do also the three women, Mrs. Gaskell, Charlotte Brontë, and George Eliot. Such instances to the contrary as there are only serve in the usual capacity of exceptions. It is the remaining third, Thackeray, Dickens, and Meredith, who are prominent in this matter as in most others.

Thackeray usually trusts to the metaphorical and allusive to secure a humorous effect. Vanity Fair is itself a symbolic term, elaborated upon in the Introduction and harped upon constantly throughout the story. The account, for instance, of the Sedley sale is prefaced by a description of a similar conclusion to the career of the late Lord Dives, the chapter beginning as follows: [1]

"If there is any exhibition in all Vanity Fair which Satire and Sentiment can visit arm in arm together; where you light on the strangest contrasts laughable and tearful; where you may be gentle and pathetic, or savage and cynical with perfect pro-

[1] *Vanity Fair*, I, 225.

priety; it is at one of those public assemblies, a crowd of which are advertised every day in the last page of the 'Times' newspaper, and over which the late Mr. George Robins used to preside with so much dignity."

And again: [1]

"This is a species of dignity in which the high-bred British female reigns supreme. To watch the behavior of a fine lady to other and humbler women, is a very good sport for a philosophical frequenter of Vanity Fair."

He delights in whimsical classic comparisons: [2]

"Is this case a rare one? and don't we see every day in the world many an honest Hercules at the apron-strings of Omphale, and great whiskered Samsons prostrate in Delilah's lap?"

Sometimes the classical is mingled in with the Scriptural: [3]

"A good housewife is of necessity a humbug; and Cornelia's husband was hoodwinked, as Potiphar was—only in a different way."

Sometimes we have a scientific simile, as the comment on Becky's ambition to be presented at Court. [4]

"If she did not wish to lead a virtuous life, at least she desired to enjoy a character for virtue, and we know that no lady in the genteel world can possess this desideratum, until she has put on a train and feathers, and has been presented to her Sovereign at court. From that august interview they come out stamped as honest women. The Lord Chamberlain gives them

[1] *Vanity Fair*, I, 396. In Chapter XIX occurs the remark, "Perhaps in Vanity Fair there are no better satires than letters."

[2] *Ibid.*, I, 214.

[3] *Ibid.*, I, 233.

[4] *Vanity Fair*, II, 304.

a certificate of virtue. And as dubious goods or letters are passed through an oven at quarantine, sprinkled with aromatic vinegar, and then pronounced clean—many a lady whose reputation would be doubtful otherwise and liable to give infection, passes through the wholesome ordeal of the Royal Presence, and issues from it free from all taint."

In his later novels Thackeray used in greater proportion the more artistic indirect method, although he could more easily have plucked out his eye and cast it from him than to have performed the same operation on his habit of moralizing, which most frequently took the form of a semi-whimsical but wholly homiletic exhortation to his dear readers to make a personal application of the lessons involved in the story.[1]

Of these later instances, one illustrates the use of literary allusion, neatly combined with the commercial.[2]

"Though, no doubt, in these matters, when Lovelace is tired of Clarissa (or the contrary), it is best for both parties to break at once, * * * yet our self-love, or our pity, or our sense of decency, does not like that sudden bankruptcy. Before we announce to the world that our firm of Lovelace and Co. can't meet its engagements, we try to make compromises; we have mournful meetings of partners; we delay the putting up of the shutters, and the dreary announcement of the failure. It must

[1] Among countless such gems, the following is of purest ray serene:

"Oh, be humble, my brother, in your prosperity! Be gentle with those who are less lucky, if not more deserving. Think, what right have you to be scornful, whose virtue is a deficiency of temptation, whose success may be a chance, whose rank may be an ancestor's accident, whose prosperity is very likely a satire." *Vanity Fair*, II, 43.

[2] *Pendennis*, II, 53.

The introductory chapter of *The Newcomes* needs only to be recalled as an instance of the satirical fable. Nor is the beginning of *Henry Esmond* lacking in the satirical tone.

come: but we pawn our jewels to keep things going a little longer."

Dickens is included with this "didactic" trio, not so much because he belongs with them as because he does not belong with the others. He cannot be classed as a negative example, but his positive contributions are relatively small. His artistic superiority to Thackeray in this respect comes, however, not from a greater knowledge of artistry, and even less from greater care for it, but through the happy accident of a vivid, dramatic temperament. He refrains from much moralizing not, we are sure, because he loves moralizing less but because he loves people and actions more. His overwhelming interest in these, his affection and respect for the doings and sayings of his characters, is too intense to allow of their being interrupted by anything. He is thus something of an artist unaware. He does not work out his own salvation by taking thought or by deliberating over ways and means; but through a fortunate preoccupation, an absorbing engagement with the concrete, he almost unconsciously dispenses with the abstract, or expresses it in terms of the specific.

It is true also that he segregates a good deal of his reflection in his Prefaces; but it crops up too often in the course of the narrative to be disregarded. One of the first showings occurs in connection with Mr. Bumble's relinquishment of the beadle's costume together with that office, and his pensive cogitations thereupon.[1]

"There are some promotions in life, which, independent of the more substantial rewards they offer, acquire peculiar value and dignity from the coats and waistcoats connected with them.

[1] *Oliver Twist*, 350. The idea was possibly suggested by *Sartor Resartus*.

A field-marshal has his uniform; a bishop his silk apron; a counsellor his silk gown; a beadle his cocked hat. Strip the bishop of his apron, or the beadle of his hat and lace; what are they? Men. Mere men. Dignity, and even holiness too, sometimes, are more questions of coat and waistcoat than some people imagine."

In his next novel, Dickens has a word for those "who pamper their compassion and need high stimulants to rouse it," and indicates the cause of hysterical zeal on the one hand or dull indifference on the other, equally misplaced: [1]

"In short, charity must have its romance, as the novelist or playwright must have his. A thief in fustian is a vulgar character, scarcely to be thought of by persons of refinement; but dress him in green velvet, with a high-crowned hat, and change the scene of his operations, from a thickly peopled city, to a mountain road, and you shall find in him the very soul of poetry and adventure."

The romance of the picturesque is one of our weaknesses; that of the mysterious is another. The latter is discussed with reference to the machinations of the Gordon Riot: [2]

"To surround anything, however monstrous or ridiculous, with an air of mystery, is to invest it with a secret charm, and power of attraction which to the crowd is irresistible. False priests, false prophets, false doctors, false patriots, false prodigies of every kind, veiling their proceeding in mystery, have always addressed themselves at an immense advantage to the popular credulity, and have been, perhaps, more indebted to that resource in gaining and keeping for a time the upper hand of Truth and Common Sense, than to any half dozen items in the whole catalogue of imposture."

[1] *Nicholas Nickleby*, I, 286. This thrust is aimed especially at *Paul Clifford*.
[2] *Barnaby Rudge*, I, 296.

Toward the legal profession the attitude of Dickens is never ambiguous, and ever and anon, as in the following instance, he expresses it with concise clarity: [1]

"The one great principle of the English law is, to make business for itself. There is no other principle distinctly, certainly, and consistently maintained through all its narrow turnings. Viewed by this light it becomes a coherent scheme, and not the monstrous maze the laity are apt to think it. Let them but once clearly perceive that its grand principle is to make business for itself at their expense, and surely they will cease to grumble."

No less favored with warmth of feeling is the famous Circumlocution Office, to which much eloquence is devoted in a chapter "containing the whole science of government." There are pages of satirical description, the keynote of which is found in an early paragraph: [2]

"This glorious establishment had been early in the field, when the one sublime principle involving the difficult art of governing a country, was first distinctly revealed to statesmen. It had been foremost to study that bright revelation, and to carry its shining influence through the whole of the official proceedings. Whatever was required to be done, the Circumlocution Office was beforehand with all the public departments in the art of perceiving—How Not To Do It."

It is recognized as something of an anomaly that Meredith should have begun publishing fiction along with George Eliot, and fifteen years before Hardy and Butler, for he belongs with the latter as post-Victorian in art and character. He represents at once the maturity of the nineteenth century and the embryonic promise of the twentieth, whose new currents were already meeting and

[1] *Bleak House*, 553.

[2] *Little Dorrit*, I, 139.

clashing with the old full tide. About him there could be nothing artless or naïve, nothing unconscious or preoccupied. Ripeness of judgment, deliberation in method, are stamped on every line, giving an effect of purposefulness without dogmatism, and profundity without owlishness. Whatever he does is done intentionally,[1] and if some lack of spontaneity is the result, it is amply compensated for by the strength and sureness that come from a man's command of himself and his material. In so far as he is obscure, involved, compactly sententious, his malice is, like Browning's, aforethought. Not in ignorance nor indifference does it arise, but from independent choice and a certain scorn of any other procedure.

Accordingly while direct satire is not wanting in his novels, it is restrained in amount and sophisticated in nature. It does not take the shape of facile application of obvious conditions, nor of flamboyant portraiture, but of concentrated analyses of phases of life, from a scientific point of view, rather than ethical, and presented with calm detachment.

Meredith is quite capable of telling pure story, as in *Vittoria* and *Harry Richmond*, but he is also capable of putting in some personal seasoning, particularly evinced in the openings of *Beauchamp's Career*, and *An Amazing Marriage*, and throughout *The Egoist*.

Of these two discursive introductions, the former is more amenable to quotation. It deals with the situation incident to a rumor of French invasion, and personifies Panic as a sleepy old spinster roused into brief hysteria, and lapsing back into comfortable stupor.[2]

[1] Cf. his description of one of his favorite characters, Nesta Radnor,—"what she did, she intended to do."

[2] *Beauchamp's Career*, 2, 3, 4.

"This being apprehended, by the aid of our own shortness of figures and the agitated images of the red-breeched only waiting the signal to jump and be at us, there ensued a curious exhibition that would be termed, in simple language, writing to the newspapers, for it took the outward form of letters: in reality, it was the deliberate saddling of our ancient nightmare of Invasion, putting the postillion on her, and trotting her along the high-road with a winding horn to rouse old Panic. * * * She did a little mischief by dropping on the stock-markets; in other respects she was harmless, and, inasmuch as she established a subject for conversation, useful.

"Then, lest she should have been taken too seriously, the Press, which had kindled, proceeded to extinguish her with the formidable engines called leading articles, which fling fire or water, as the occasion may require. * * *

"Then the people, rather ashamed, abused the Press for unreasonably disturbing them. The Press attacked old Panic and stripped her naked. Panic, with a desolate scream, arraigned the Parliamentary Opposition for having inflated her to serve base party purposes. The Opposition challenged the allegations of Government, * * * and proclaimed itself the watch-dog of the country."

At about this juncture the enemy himself stepped in and announced there never had been any need for the dog to bark at all:

"So, then, Panic, or what remained of her, was put to bed again. The Opposition retired into its kennel growling. The People coughed like a man of two minds, doubting whether he has been divinely inspired or has cut a ridiculous figure. The Press interpreted the cough as a warning to Government; and Government launched a big ship with hurrahs, and ordered the recruiting-sergeant to be seen conspicuously."

All this would seem sufficient, but it appears that the real sting after these preliminary pricks, is in the tail.

The picture concludes with the bulky figure of the Tax-Payer looming in the background; he is pointed out with the laconic comment: [1]

"Will you not own that the working of the system for scaring him and bleeding him is very ingenious? But whether the ingenuity comes of native sagacity, as it is averred by some, or whether it shows an instinct laboring to supply the deficiencies of stupidity, according to others, I cannot express an opinion."

The satiric parentheses in *The Egoist* are naturally concerned not with politics but with individual men and women, chiefly in their relationships to one another. A few instances will serve.

Referring to the selfish folly of the masculine demand for feminine delicacy rather than strength, Meredith says of women: [2]

"Are they not of a nature warriors, like men?—men's mates to bear them heroes instead of puppets? But the devouring male Egoist prefers them as inanimate overwrought polished pure-metal precious vessels, fresh from the hands of the artificer, for him to walk away with hugging, call all his own, drink of, and fill and drink of, and forget that he stole them."

Again, apropos of that "adoring female's worship," destined only for the strong, "who maintain the crown

[1] *Beauchamp's Career*, 6.

[2] *The Egoist*, 132. Later he indicates the corollary of this,—

"But not many men are trained to courage; young women are trained to cowardice. For them to front an evil with plain speaking is to be guilty of effrontery and forfeit the waxen polish of purity, and therewith their commanding place in the market." *Ibid.*, 296.

Cf. *Evan Harrington*, 208, for the muddled state of a young woman's mind, only to be penetrated by "that zigzag process of inquiry conducted by following her actions, for she can tell you nothing, and if she does not want to know a particular matter, it must be a strong beam from the central system of facts that shall penetrate her."

by holding divinely independent of the great emotion they have sown," he says: [1]

"In the one hundred and fourth chapter of the thirteenth volume of the Book of Egoism, it is written: *Possession without obligation to the object possessed approaches felicity.*"

When we turn to plot or situation as a vehicle of satire, we find an almost exact parallel, as to proportionate amount, to the reflective type just discussed. More than half of the novelists on our list have no examples worthy of special mention. A few insert amusing episodes, not especially germane to the main plot. And the three notable instances, where the satiric situation is a feature of importance, where it influences the whole trend of the movement, affects the leading characters, and plays a part in the climax, occur in the three real satires, *Martin Chuzzlewit*, *Vanity Fair*, and *The Egoist;* so that Dickens, Thackeray, and Meredith are again our main theme.

Situation or action is of course merely the dramatization of character, and not to be distinguished from it except as actual expression is distinguished from the capacity for it. Individuals speak for themselves instead of being spoken for, although they often convey more than they mean to, and much that they would not. Since this form of art has its own medium in the drama, it is there that we look for the most perfect and concentrated expression, and expect to find it in the novel only in the latter's dramatic moments, which may be few and far between. But as the *dénouement* of the drama usually turns on some phase of poetic justice, either in its tragic or its comic aspect, so also does this dramatic element in fiction. Satire in situation is therefore concerned with the comedy

[1] *The Egoist*, 156.

of poetic justice, and is successful in so far as that sense is appealed to and satisfied.

In their respective stories, Pecksniff, Becky Sharp, and Sir Willoughby Patterne are the people of most importance, if not the heroes; and in each case the climax of the career is a ludicrous anticlimax, with circumstances appropriate in every instance to the character.

The unveiling of Pecksniff is a public and demonstrative affair, in accordance with the public and demonstrative nature of his previous life, and also, one may add, with the Dickensian theory of the fitness of humorous retribution. In spite of the crude melodrama of the scene, there is fundamental truth in the most important item in it, the behavior of the one toward whom all eyes are turned in hostile contempt. He needed no loyal, anxious mother to beg him to "be 'umble," for his humility was not as the Heeps'. It was a superior article, self-possessed and patronizing, not servile and ingratiating, and it was therefore impregnable. Uriah might be discomfited when his mask was publicly torn away, but the Pecksniffian duplicity was no mere flimsy detachable mask. It was the very skin of his face; indeed, it was more than skin deep; it was the stuff of his soul. He could therefore be imperturbable, though felled to the floor, a dignified martyr, grieved but gracious under calumny, unquelled by those who had assembled to do him dishonor.

This impressiveness serves Pecksniff, as her wit serves Becky, to mitigate the absurdity which threatens him. It is not in this heightened moment that his comicality is apparent; it is in the retrospective picture we get of him through the revelation of Martin Chuzzlewit, whereby he is seen not only as the biter bit, but as the calf, the bland,

assured, shrewd yet unsuspecting calf, that, being given plenty of rope, promptly hanged himself.

In the downfall of Becky there is less of the comic and more of the tragic, though Thackeray does not choose to invest her with enough dignity for tragedy. She is less absurd than Pecksniff or Sir Willoughby for several reasons. She is more human and has the claim of normal humanity on our sympathy; she is the product of circumstances, clearly shown to be largely responsible for her failure both in aspiration and achievement, whereas theirs is gratuitous and without excuse; and she is herself too much of a jester to be patronized by the ridicule of others. She too can keep up appearances to the last, not by reinforcing her hypocrisy but by being able to dispense with it, when it no longer serves, and to mock at it along with everything else. The only real joke she is the victim of comes comparatively early, when she discovers she might become Lady Crawley were she not already daughter-in law of the coveted and forfeited title.

This theme of a vaulting ambition o'erleaping itself is a favorite with Thackeray, and he did some good apprentice work on it in *The Fatal Boots*, and *Yellowplush Memoirs*. In the former the unwelcome wedding present comes as a delightful bit of comic nemesis. But the outcome of the latter, with an accomplished swindler outwitted by his own father, and a helpless woman ruthlessly sacrificed, savors too much of tragedy to be amusing.

Sir Willoughby is only an egoist, not a hypocrite nor a sycophant; and being a gentleman can suffer naught but a gentlemanly humiliation. Such a one is not to be knocked down and taunted in the presence of his little world; he is merely made a subject of gossip and speculation: nor is he to be reduced to sordid material scheming; his intrigues are

all on the spiritual plane. A destiny that seemed kind but proved cruel created him the central sun to his own solar system. His only sin was the desire to maintain that position by exerting a strong but legitimate centripetal force upon his satellites: if any centrifugal force should become stronger, they must simply drop off into space. His mate he conceived of as the fairest star of all, gladly answering an imperious summons to disregard even the laws of gravitation, to surrender even the personality of a satellite, to rush headlong to a union that secured enlargement of the sun by the quenching and absorption of the star. And for this, his only punishment was the refusal, incredible, presumptuous, on the part of a succession of chosen stars to surrender, to rush, to be absorbed. His utmost penalty was the decree that he must be content with the indifferent attendance of a weary moon whose own light had grown cold and who avowed an allegiance at the most, dutiful, quite disillusioned, and granted because of a pressure that amounted to compulsion.

Externally his situation is prosperous and respectable. He remains an aristocrat of wealth and station, "the humour of whom," as his own author says,[1] "scarcely dimples the surface and is distinguishable but by very penetrative, very wicked imps, whose fits of roaring below at some generally imperceptible stroke of his quality, have first made the mild literary angels aware of something comic in him," and whose figure therefore never becomes palpably absurd. Only by the "detective vision" of the imps is he seen poised on the pinnacle of absurdity, while the Pecksniffs and Becky Sharps of the world cluster around its base.

The poetic justice of this comedy in narrative is per-

[1] *The Egoist*, 5.

fect because the pit the victim falls into is one of his own digging and the digging is of his own volition (popularly speaking, without reference to the metaphysics of determinism). From the first moment of Sir Willoughby's philandering with Lætitia Dale to the last unlucky turning of the key in young Crossjay's room, all was spontaneous, a long list of self-indulgences that turned into self-avengers. It was not essential that he should play upon the sentimental romanticism of his adoring feminine neighbor; nor that he should protest so emphatically to Clara that he never never could by any possibility bring himself to marry Laetitia; nor that he should himself provide a witness to his overcoming of that boasted impossibility,—and make the sacrifice for nothing after all, —when the absence of a witness would have saved the day for him. But having done all these things he had to pay the price, though it rendered him bankrupt in vanity, and for him that was bankruptcy indeed.

Yet for all that he is food for mirth, one must yield to a lurking sympathy for the unhappy Patterne. A wound is a wound and may cause exquisite pain, even if inflicted only on self-love. A Pecksniff and a Becky are invulnerable; he is protected from pelting rain by his own oiliness, she by her inimitable faculty for borrowing umbrellas. Lætitia was indeed finally secured as Sir Willoughby's umbrella, but not before he had been alarmingly threattened if not actually soaked.

If we measured our laughter by the real feelings of its object instead of our conception of the frivolity or sacredness of those feelings, we should undoubtedly find it much diminished. We could not enjoy the predicament of Sir Willoughby or Sir John Falstaff or Malvolio or any of the notable company of the Mighty Fallen. Whereas we do

enjoy them with unrestrained relish on the supposition that their fall is not that of a Cæsar or a Napoleon. Yet these also were egoists, and those would fain have been conquering heroes. Meredith testifies to this in his preliminary analysis: [1]

"The Egoist surely inspires pity. He who would desire to clothe himself at everybody's expense, and is of that desire condemned to strip himself stark naked, he, if pathos ever had a form, might be taken for the actual person."

In addition to these instances where the continual and final absurdity of the situation is made the *motif* of the novel, there are several cases of minor episodes, quite as suggestive though on a smaller scale.

Dickens is, as might be supposed, the most fertile in these scenes of comic retribution. Aside from Pecksniff and Uriah Heep, he is most successful with the Lammles, Mr. Dorrit, and Silas Wegg.

The Veneering Dinner, which introduces *Our Mutual Friend*, is only an understudy to the Veneering Breakfast, which celebrates the marriage of two of the Veneerings' oldest friends.

"But, there is another time to come, and it comes in about a fortnight, and it comes to Mr. and Mrs. Lammle on the sands at Shanklin, in the Isle of Wight.

"Mr. and Mrs. Lammle have walked for some time on the Shanklin sands, and one may see by their foot-prints that they have not walked arm-in-arm, and that they have not walked in a straight track, and that they have walked in a moody humour; for, the lady has prodded little spirting holes in the damp sand before her with her parasol, and the gentleman has trailed his stick after him. As if he were of the Mephistopheles family indeed, and had walked with a drooping tail." [2]

[1] *The Egoist*, 5.

[2] *Our Mutual Friend*, I, 166.

It is not an angelic council that follows, though it has the virtues of candor, contrition, and a judicious conclusion, proposed by the Belial of the conference, to make the best of a bad bargain by forming a union of intrigue against the world in general and the diabolical Veneerings in particular. Thus mutual in greed, in gullibility, in consequent remorse, and in unholy alliance, this pair of frauds form the real mutuality of Dickens' Vanity Fair.

Silas Wegg and William Dorrit stand at the two extremes, for one is farcical and the other tragic, yet they meet on a common ground, the comedy of exposure. The farcical villain may be dismissed with the comment that his dramatic exit, though richly done, bears some marks of the childishness and vulgarity that his author could not always avoid. The tragic comedian, on the other hand, stands before us in an unconscious self-betrayal no less impressive and startling in its way than that of the sleep-walking Lady Macbeth. Nowhere in English literature, indeed, is there a picture more awful in its simple inevitability than the eloquent speech addressed to the guests at Mrs. Merdle's dinner table by the affable, patronizing Father of the Marshalsea.

Such ironic penalizings as these are satires of circumstances, sport which beguiles the ennuied Immortals. Immeasurably lower in the scale is the practical joke indulged in by mortals; yet in such deeds we may reckon Mistresses Ford and Page, Sir Toby and Maria, as human deputies acting for a requiting destiny. Perhaps our best example of this obvious but joyous kind of satire is one found in almost the first novel of almost the first name on our list, Lytton's *Pelham*. It is the Parisian incident of the amorous M. Margot and the clever Mrs. Green, wherein the conceit and credulity of the former is played

upon by the shrewd and merry malice of the latter, until he finds himself distressingly suspended in a basket from her lofty window late in a chilly night, to the great amusement of divers spectators previously invited there for that purpose.

Much more subtle and hence much more intellectually satisfying is the trap in which another amorous gentleman, the Reverend Mr. Slope, is caught by another clever lady, Signora Neroni.[1]

"Mr. Slope was madly in love, but hardly knew it. The signora spitted him, as a boy does a cockchafer on a cork, that she might enjoy the energetic agony of his gyrations. And she knew very well what she was doing."

In their memorable interview the accomplished Phoedria led this poor Cymochles into a fearful, tangled web, there to struggle and flounder until she released him with mocking scorn, having illustrated perfectly Meredith's remark about another and more famous egoist: [2]

"A lover pretending too much by one foot's length of pretense, will have that foot caught in her trap."

Even then, however, fate had not done her worst, for the cockchafer was literally to be slapped in the face by the more direct and active Eleanor Bold. The comment on this latter scene may be cited as an example of the mock heroic vein occasionally used in the service of satire from Swift and Fielding on.[3]

"But how shall I sing the divine wrath of Mr. Slope, or how invoke the tragic muse to describe the rage which swelled the celestial bosom of the bishop's chaplain? Such an undertaking

[1] Trollope: *Barchester Towers*, 299.
[2] *The Egoist*, 4. The "her" refers to Comedy.
[3] *Barchester Towers*, 472–3.

by no means befits the low-heeled buskin of modern fiction. The painter put a veil over Agamemnon's face when called on to depict the father's grief at the early doom of his devoted daughter. The god, when he resolved to punish the rebellious winds, abstained from mouthing empty threats. We will not attempt to tell with what mighty surgings of the inner heart Mr. Slope swore to revenge himself on the woman who had disgraced him, nor will we vainly strive to depict his deep agony of soul.

"There he is, however, alone in the garden-walk, and we must contrive to bring him out of it. * * * He stood motionless, undecided, glaring with his eyes, thinking of the pains and penalties of Hades, and meditating how he might best devote his enemy to the infernal gods with all the passion of his accustomed eloquence. He longed in his heart to be preaching at her. 'Twas thus that he was ordinarily avenged of sinning mortal men and women. Could he at once have ascended his Sunday rostrum and fulminated at her such denunciations as his spirit delighted in, his bosom would have been greatly eased."

The routing of this clergyman is balanced by the triumph of another, in a later volume of the series, though in an entirely different cause.[1] None of our novelists has given us a more delectable scene than the one which marked the culmination of those triangular interviews with which Bishop Proudie's study was so familiar. Here Mrs. Proudie, that mighty Amazon, is brought low, and that, through a dastardly blow of fate, by a foe unworthy of her steel, albeit she had not considered him unworthy of her persecution. She is now made to endure two kinds of anguish, both new and both terrible. The first is being ignored. The second is being talked back to and then left before she can reply. It is a glorious moment for all but the defeated when one weary badgered opponent

[1] *Last Chronicles of Barset.*

thunders at her, "Peace, Woman!" and adds that she would better be minding her distaff; and another weary badgered opponent, her sleek and pampered husband, jumps from his chair at the sound, not in anger at the unchivalrous Mr. Crawley but in admiration of his incredible courage and astounding victory.

Of these various roads open to the writer of satirical intent, those just indicated, by direct reflection and by dramatic scenes, are in the nature of by-ways. They are for the most part occasional and incidental; valuable chiefly as securing the piquant and diversified effect necessary to the literature that aims to amuse, even when the amusement itself is secondary in the real design.

The main highway is that of character. By the kind of characters he can create and by his attitude toward them shall the novelist be known. There are the idealized, the respected, the beloved, the censured, the anathematized. The group selected for our especial concern in this study is formed of those pilloried by the rebuke humorous. Such, however,—the comic and therefore the ridiculed,—are objects of satire and accordingly more suitably considered in the following section. It is the opposite class that constitutes a factor in satiric method. This phase of the discussion will therefore be confined to the wits, those who may be called satirists in their own right, and so used by the author as a dramatic means to his satiric end.

Wit is the diamond of the intellectual world, precious on account of its rarity, its brilliancy, and the sense of infinite time, matter, and compression that have gone into its transformation from common charcoal. Brevity is indeed an element of it; but its soul is perception, a vision at once quick and penetrating, the radio-activity of the mind.

Being such, it has the infrequence that marks all excellence, both in life and its mirrored reflection. There is much of an unsatiric and subintellectual order, the kind that comes from ingenuity and cunning, and takes the shape of pranks and jests for the fun of them; manifest in Diccon, Autolycus, and the Court Fools,—though these last often have much meat in them. Then there is the clever befooling for a purpose, as seen in Portia, getting her own ring by a subterfuge; or Kate Hardcastle, stooping to conquer. There is also the bitter temper which animates a Katherina, checkmated only by a Petruchio; this produces too a Thersites to be the cheese and digestion of Achilles; and Cleopatra, gibing at "the married woman."

Wit, however, is something more than merriment or malice; and short is the list of its worthy examples. Lysistrata is not only a vigorous feminist but pungent on the theme. Pertelote and the Wife of Bath illumine masculine superstition and conservatism. Benedict and Beatrice sparkle by mutual concussion. The melancholy Jaques and the melancholy Dane are the finest of satiric philosophers. Subtle the Alchemist enjoys with a huge private relish the gullibility he exploits. Fra Lippo Lippi graces with gayety the professional pretense and policy he exposes. These compose a distinctive and exclusive company, and few there are who may be added unto them.

Within the novel the proportion is almost as small. The most noteworthy prototypes to Victorian fiction are Matthew Bramble and, in a girlish fashion, Evelina. (Lady Emily, in Susan Ferrier's *Marriage*, might be included). But these, through the thin guise of letters, are Smollett and Burney as completely as Gulliver and Shandy are Swift and Sterne through the thinner guise of the dramatic

monologue. More objective are Jane Austen's Mr. Bennet and his daughter Elizabeth. The former particularly is a satiric soloist acting as Greek chorus to the follies of his wife, daughters, and certain young men.

This delightful relationship between father and daughter, a sort of satiric defensive alliance against the besieging army of silly exactions and vexations, finds a clear if fainter echo in that of Dr. Gibson and Molly (in Mrs. Gaskell's *Wives and Daughters*), who plan in the temporary absence of the elegant stepmother to do "everything that is unrefined and ungenteel."

The exponents of satiric wit in the Victorian novel may be thrown for convenience into three or four divisions.

There is the native or rustic type, whose shrewd observations are condensed into homely but poignant epigrams. That such characters have always existed is evident from the existence of a whole literature of proverbial philosophy, of anonymous origin, like ballads and fabliaux. Conspicuous in the van of the few who have been lifted from this obscure anonymity is the redoubtable Mrs. Poyser. It is no valid discount to George Eliot's achievement to say she produced only one Mrs. Poyser. Indeed, it might add something to her luster to note that no other novelist has produced even one.

The only other deserving of mention is a countryman in Lytton's *What Will He Do with It*, chosen in this case also because he illustrates the generic class of stage-drivers, whose brightest light is the American Yuba Bill. This one is described in the chapter heading [1] as "a charioteer, to whom an experience of British Laws suggests an ingenious mode of arresting the progress of Roman Papacy." He discourses to his passenger: [2]

[1] Book II, Chapter I.

[2] Vol. I, 78–9.

"My wife's grandfather was put into Chancery just as he was growing up, and never grew afterwards—never got out o' it. Nout ever does. There's our church warden comes to me with a petition to sign agin the Pope. Says I, 'that old Pope is always in trouble—what's he bin doin' now?' Says he, 'Spreading! He's agot into Parlyment, and now he's got a colledge, and we pays for it. I doesn't know how to stop him.' Says I, 'Put the Pope into Chancery along with wife's grandfather, and he'll never spread agin.'"

The urban counterpart of this type is the child of the city streets, of which we have specimens in the sophisticated gamins, the Artful Dodger and Dick Swiveller. In this Dickens has a monopoly, such as it is.

Coming up from the ranks, we reach the intellectual aristocrat, whose culture enables him to add polish to his satiric pith and point. It happens that the two most representative characters of this type are furnished by the two authors who stand at chronological extremes, though the volumes in which they occur are only three years apart.[1]

Kenelm Chillingly is the melancholy Victorian. After the initial lapse into a bit of grotesque caricature in the account of his babyhood,—a thing that would have been avoided by a writer of more restrained taste,—the author paints his portrait with skill, distinction, and truth. His Coming of Age speech to the assembled tenants and guests on that joyful occasion is truly startling, but far from incredible. The audacious youngster, with his grave, serene, matter of fact pessimism, exposes in a searching analysis the discrepancy between the supposed reality they were felicitating themselves and him upon and an ideal which is quite beyond their comprehension. Yet it is an unquestionably practical ideal, and it breaks like a

[1] Lytton's *Kenelm Chillingly*, 1873, and Meredith's *Beauchamp's Career*, 1876.

slow, cold, somber light through the shallow sentiment that had been screening some disconcerting depths.

It is true, he says, that the Chillinglys come from a remote race, but length of tenure has meant only so much more inanity.[1]

"They were born to eat as long as they could eat, and when they could eat no longer they died. Not that in this respect they were a whit less insignificant than the generality of their fellow creatures."

He reminds his gaping, rural audience that man merely represents a stage in the course of evolution.[2]

"The probability is that, some day or other, we shall be exterminated by a new development of species."

He goes on ruthlessly to assert that, contrary to the popular belief, his father was not a good landlord, because he was too indulgent to the individual and too heedless of national welfare, ignoring the highest duty of the employer, maximum production through competitive examination. As to his own college record: [3]

"Some of the most useless persons—especially narrow-minded and bigoted—have acquired far higher honours at the university than have fallen to my lot."

And then, after a brilliant Schopenhauerish conclusion, he drinks to their very good healths.

Thus launched, the meditative young man continues in a career of ironic candor, although he learns later the wisdom of being candid only with oneself at times, and less communicative to others; as for instance when he soliloquizes on a request by farmer Saunderson: [4]

[1] Lytton's *Kenelm Chillingly*, 38.

[2] *Ibid.*, 39. An echo from *The Coming Race*, published two years earlier.

[3] *Ibid.*, 40.

[4] *Ibid.*, 90. Later he imagines a hypothetical contribution to *The Londoner*.

"One can't wonder why every small man thinks it so pleasant to let down a big one, when a father asks a stranger to let down his own son for even fancying that he is not small beer. It is upon that principle in human nature that criticism wisely relinquishes its pretensions as an analytical science, and becomes a lucrative profession. It relies on the pleasure its readers find in letting a man down."

Dr. Shrapnel is a sad and tragic figure, bowed by an altruistic grief at the state of human affairs, yet over his clouded sky play some sharp lightning flashes; witness his vivid simile describing the Tories, thus reported: [1]

"He compares them to geese claiming possession of the whole common, and hissing at every foot of ground they have to yield. They're always having to retire and always hissing. 'Retreat and menace,' that's the motto for them."

There are a few characters remaining who cannot be omitted from this group of witty satirists, who do not quite belong to any of the above classes, and who do have a common bond, though only the artificial one of femininity. They must therefore be mentioned as Women; Mrs. Poyser being summoned for a second enrollment, and Mrs. Cadwallader added. It is true that their animadversions are largely directed against some faults in the prevailing system of courtship, marriage, and a masculine-managed

bringing "that highly intellectual journal into discredit by a feeble attempt at a good-natured criticism or a generous sentiment." 161.

Kenelm grows into some likeness to his old tutor Welby, an unpedantic, versatile scholar, who belonged to "the school of Eclectical Christology." The Rev. John Chillingly, for instance, did not perceive Welby's realism, for the latter listened to idealistic eulogies without contradicting them; having "grown too indolent to be combative in conversation, and only as a critic betrayed such pugnacity as remained to him by the polished cruelty of sarcasm." 34.

[1] *Beauchamp's Career*, 167.

universe, but not exclusively so, nor are they the only critics of those subjects.

Two others besides George Eliot have made a single but notable contribution to this list, Thackeray and Charlotte Brontë. Rebecca Sharp is too well known to need more than appreciative mention. Shirley Keeldar is interesting as being what the author's "sister Emily might have been." She is a spicily sweet, lovable character, clearly presented both in action and in such touches of description as,[1]

"* * * ever ready to satirize her own or any other person's enthusiasm, she would have given a farm of her best land for a chance of rendering good service."

She converses with her friend Caroline about literature: [2]

"Milton was great; but was he good? His brain was right; how was his heart? * * * Milton tried to see the first woman; but, Cary, he saw her not. * * * It was his cook that he saw; or it was Mrs. Gill, * * * preparing a cold collation for the rectors. * * * I would beg to remind him that the first men of the earth were Titans, and that Eve was their mother."

In a spirited speech to Uncle Sympson, who craved to get rid of the exasperating minx by disposing of her in respectable matrimony, she baits and badgers him until his feeble intellect is nearly shattered, ideas outraged, temper twisted beyond repair. No Victorian young niece should say to an elderly conventional guardian: [3]

"Your god, sir, is the World. * * * Your great Bel, your fish-tailed Dagon. * * * See him busied at the work he likes best—making marriages. He binds the young to the

[1] *Shirley*, II, 90. [2] *Ibid.*, II, 351, [3] *Ibid.*, II, 250.

old, the strong to the imbecile. He stretches out the arm of Mezentius and fetters the dead to the living."

The novelist most admittedly generous to women is Meredith, and we have him to thank for Margaret Lovell, Mrs. Mountstuart Jenkinson, Diana Warwick, and Clara Middleton, with Mrs. Berry as a sort of compromise between Mrs. Poyser and Mrs. Tulliver. Yet they do not any more than live up to their boasted reputations, as dainty rogues in porcelain, famous epigrammatists, the quoted astonishment of drawing-rooms.[1]

The real Victorian Shakespeare in the matter of women is Trollope. Not entirely unworthy of the sisterhood of Beatrice, Viola, and Portia, are Miss Dunstable, Lily Dale, Lucy Robarts, and Violet Effingham; Madeline Stanhope might be added as a village Cleopatra.

[1] It is not in a novel but the shortest of his Short Stories that Meredith has presented to us his truly wittiest character, shown with the brief but startling distinctness of a flash-light. Nowhere is there a more perfect embodiment of the satiric spirit than Lady Camper. It required a malicious imagination to produce the cartoons of the City of Wilsonople, and to use them with such wicked effectiveness. Yet this Limb of Satan was maleficent only to bless, ultimately. The fine military figure upon which she turned the shaft of illumination is equally perfect as the incarnate satirizible; not a sinner, not a villain, but a complacent, fatuous, selfish gentleman, "open to exposure in his little whims, foibles, tricks, incompetencies," but capable of an improvement that amounted to regeneration.

"Well, General," his teleological tormentor finally explains, "you were fond of thinking of yourself, and I thought I would assist you. I gave you plenty of subject-matter. I will not say I meant to work a homœopathic cure."

She further admonishes him that the triumph is his rather than hers, if he cares to make the most of it. "Your fault has been to quit active service, General, and love your ease too well * * * You are ten times the man in exercise. Why, do you mean to tell me that you would have cared for those drawings of mine when marching?" Idleness, moreover, is a first aid to vanity. "You would not have cared one bit for a caricature," Lady Camper continues, "if you had not nursed the absurd idea of being one of our conquerors." His final salvation, she concludes, was his sensitiveness to ridicule.

Lily Dale is plaintively sympathetic on the subject of the sorrows of men through the vexations of their amusements: [1]

"Women must amuse themselves, except for an annual treat or two. But the catering for men's sport is never ending, and is always paramount to everything else. And yet the pet game of the day never goes off properly. In partridge time, the partridges are wild and won't come to be killed. In hunting time, the foxes won't run straight,—the wretches. They show no spirit, and will take to ground to save their brushes. Then comes a nipping frost, and skating is proclaimed; but the ice is always rough, and the woodcocks have deserted the country. And as for salmon,—when the summer comes round I do really believe that they suffer a great deal about the salmon. I am sure they never catch any. So they go back to their clubs and their cards, and abuse their cooks and blackball their friends."

As to the adorable, captivating kind, she is not too sanguine: [2]

"The Apollos of the world * * * who are so full of feeling, so soft-natured, so kind, who never say a cross word, who never get out of bed on the wrong side in the morning,—it so often turns out that they won't wash."

Of Lucy Robarts Trollope himself speaks with justifiable pride, and says he does not see "how any character could be more natural than she." She is indeed a sunny, breezy, English maid, endowed with charm, enterprise, and a resourcefulness that could outwit with dignity the titled dowager who did not want to be her mother-in-law. But her chief distinction, in which she is more unusual than "natural," is the possession of that kind of humor defined by Howells as "the cry of pain of a well-bred man." When her pride is wounded, her love baffled, her happiness ap-

[1] *Last Chronicles of Barset*, 97. [2] *Ibid.*, 175.

parently shipwrecked, her course of action made most difficult, she is able to say to her sister: [1]

"Fanny, you have no idea what an absolute fool I am, what an unutterable ass. The soft words of which I tell you were of the kind which he speaks to you when he asks you how the cow gets on which he sent you from Ireland, or to Mark about Ponto's shoulder. * * *

"He is no hero. There is nothing on earth wonderful about him. I never heard him say a single word of wisdom, or utter a thought that was akin to poetry. He devotes all his energies to riding after a fox or killing poor birds, and I never heard of his doing a single great action in my life. And yet * * *"

In tears and breathless excitement she admits the strength and reality of her love, and continues with the diagnosis:

"I'll tell you what he has: he has fine straight legs, and a smooth forehead, and a good-humoured eye, and white teeth. Was it possible to see such a catalogue of perfections, and not fall down, stricken to the very bone? But it was not that that did it all, Fanny. I could have stood against that, I think I could, at least. It was his title that killed me. I had never spoken to a lord before."

But she is also obliged to acknowledge that she has done some injustice to her own romance and to the sincerity of Lord Lufton: [2]

"Well, it was not a dream. Here, standing here, on this very spot—on that flower of the carpet—he begged me a dozen times to be his wife. I wonder whether you and Mark would let me cut it out and keep it."

No solution to her matrimonial problem being offered, she suggests one: [3]

[1] *Framley Parsonage*, 259. [2] *Framley Parsonage*, 264. [3] *Ibid.*, 266.

"'And what shall I do next?' said Lucy, still speaking in a tone that was half tragic and half jeering.

"'Do?' said Mrs. Robarts.

"'Yes, something must be done. If I were a man I could go to Switzerland, of course; or, as the case is a bad one, perhaps as far as Hungary. What is it that girls do? they don't die now-a-days, I believe. * * * I have got a piece of sackcloth, and I mean to wear that, when I have made it up.'"

We are relieved to hear later that no such drastic action was necessary, as she became Lady Lufton and was able to be happy without overworking her sense of humor.

These instances may serve to indicate the general method and effect of so-called realism applied to satiric intent, so long as allowance is made for the unreal and distorted nature of all incomplete and isolated cases, butchered to make an analytic holiday.

CHAPTER III

THE IRONIC

The science of Esthetics is a tribute to our zeal in attempting to define the indefinable word beauty. Nearly as elusive of categoric bondage is *irony;* but for its capture no formal scientific crusade has as yet been organized. It is, however, whether in spite of its vagueness or because of it, a term of great and increasing popularity. No phrase is at present more of a general favorite than "The Irony of Fate," no exclamation more frequent than "How ironic!" In this expressive and impressive utterance there is as much individual variation of meaning as in "How beautiful!" And it coexists with as much possibility of a standardized conception. What the latter may be, it is the business of the student of the subject to try to determine.

The etymology and early usage of the word are familiar enough. Generically, to the ancient Greeks, irony meant dissimulation in speech; specifically, that form of dissimulation used by Socrates for the confusion of his dialectic opponent, consisting on the part of the wise man of an assumption of ignorance which longed for enlightenment. On this bated hook were caught the unwary who pretended to wisdom the while they had it not, lured by flattering inquiry to a fatal communicativeness.

In its present status the term has two fairly distinct divisions, characterized by Bishop Thirwall, in his essay on the Irony of Sophocles, as the *verbal* and the *practical.* The former is the rhetorical device whereby a certain idea

or circumstance is implied by its statement in terms to the contrary or to the opposite effect. The latter is the contrast between the real and apparent state of things, or between the expected and the eventual, commonly described as the Irony of Fate. A third form, the kind known as dramatic irony, might be mentioned, though it is really a subdivision of cosmic irony.[1] For the actor makes his blunders and gets into his predicaments through ignorance; and this discrepancy between his notion of things and their actuality adds zest to the enjoyment of the spectator, who is in the secret. So the great unseen Spectator is conceived to observe the stage of the world, and derive the amusement of superior knowledge from that

> "Which, for the Pastime of Eternity,
> He doth himself contrive, enact, behold."

Among these varieties, and between all of them and the original meaning, there must be enough common ground to account for the persistence of the terminology through the centuries, allowing for the divergence natural to a slow and half conscious evolution. This common ground of denotation is of course dissimulation, whether in the restricted field of knowledge, or the complete reversal of statement and intention, or the specious show of things whereby we are deluded into an erroneous supposition or a false sense of security. But this simple matter of deception is enveloped in an atmosphere of connotation that is charged with complication and subtlety.

The ironic habit of speech is a sign of a mind imaginative and averse to the obvious. Its indulgence indicates a love

[1] On dramatic irony, see *American Philological Association Transactions*, 1917, for summary of an interesting unpublished paper read before the Society by Dr. J. S. P. Tatlock.

of concealment, from æsthetic motives, and a corresponding abhorrence of flat, naïve exposure. The ironist has taken the veil of covertness to protect himself from the garish overt day.[1] Its reception, on the other hand, is an equally sure indicator of disposition. For it is beloved of its own kin, deep answering unto deep, and distrusted by the alien with a repulsion as strong as that of the subtle for the simple. To understand or not to understand the ironic is an acid test of the literal mind. An apposite reference to this fact is found in a comment on one of our novelists.[2]

"Some simple-minded people are revolted, even in literature, by the ironical method; and tell the humourist, with an air of moral disapproval, that they never know whether he is in jest or in earnest. To such matter-of-fact persons Mr. Disraeli's novels must be a standing offense, for it is his most characteristic peculiarity that the passage from one phase to the other is imperceptible."

Another reason for the prejudice against ironic language may be that it is popularly supposed to emanate from a

[1] As advised by John Brown in his *Essay on Satire:*

"The Muse's charms resistless then assail,
When wrapt in *irony's* transparent veil;
* * * * *
Then be your lines with sharp encomiums grac'd;
Style *Clodius* honorable, *Busa* chaste."

And not long before this, Dryden had been saying: "How easy it is to call rogue and villain, and that wittily! But how hard to make a man appear a fool, a blockhead, or a knave, without using any of these opprobrious terms! * * * Neither is it true that this fineness of raillery is offensive. A witty man is tickled while he is hurt in this manner, and a fool feels it not." *Essay on Satire*, 98.

[2] Stephen: *Hours in a Library*, Second Series. 347.

Another critic of another novelist makes the point by a vivid illustration:

"A rabbit fondling its own harmless face affords no matter of amusement to another rabbit, and Miss Austen has had many readers who have perused her works without a smile." Raleigh: *The English Novel*, 253.

caustic soul, with leanings toward cynicism; an error due to a narrow identification of irony with its extreme right wing,—sarcasm, which is indeed, as its etymology would signify, a flesh-tearing, or at least heart-rending, performance, belonging, as Bishop Hall would say, to the toothed division of satire.

But on the extreme left sits banter, entirely amiable and even affectionate. "You scamp, you rascal, you young villain!" is a favorite way of expressing parental pride and tenderness. Reticent youth apostrophizes his cherished friend as an "old fraud." "Philosophic irony," says Anatole France, "is indulgent and gentle." [1] And Symonds [2] describes Ariosto as watching "the doings of humanity with a genial half smile, an all pervasive irony that had no sting in it." Ranging thus from the playful to the ferocious, irony is at its best when not too near either margin, having in itself more point than banter and more polish than sarcasm. "They are all," says another critic,[3] "with others of the family, in the regular service of Satire."

The metaphor of service may be allowed, in that satire, being the largest and most general type, includes the others. The relationship may be stated more literally by saying that irony is the form of humorous criticism which is expressed through innuendo, partly because of preference for verbal inversion, and partly in recognition of the topsy-turvydom of life. All irony is therefore satirical, though not all satire is ironical. The ironist conveys his own point of view by stating another's, condemning by appearing to approve, or *vice versa*. Boisterousness and didacticism are foreign to irony and not to be feared so long as it is dominant. Perfection in its employment indicates

[1] *Life and Letters*, I, 207. [2] *The Renaissance in Italy*, V, 8.
[3] *Irony*, *Living Age*, 259: 250.

that complete self-control which is supposed to be a patrician trait.

This does not mean, however, that ironic usage or attitude has been confined to the upper social stratum as its special prerogative. Nietzsche may indeed exclaim, "We should look upon the needs of the masses with ironic compassion: they want something which we have got—Ah!" But these compassionated masses have themselves been capable of the retort ironic, and have had also their spokesmen, from Lucian to Galsworthy. In *The Cock*, Lucian gives an ironic enumeration of the dangers and troubles of the rich and powerful, and displays the advantage of being poor and obscure. In *The Ferry*, Mycellus, the cobbler, voices an ironic lament on leaving life, and parodies the regrets of the wealthy: [1]

"Oh, dear, dear! My shoe-soles! Oh! My old boots! Oh! What will become of my rotten sandals? Alas, poor wretch that I am, I shall no longer go without food from early morning until evening, nor in winter time walk barefoot and half naked, my teeth chattering from the cold. Ah, me! Who, forsooth, is going to have my shoemaker's knife and my awl?"

As manner of speech is but a reflection of manner of thought, it is evident that the ironist is not sufficiently accounted for as a devotee of a certain verbal device. This, on the contrary, is only an external manifestation of something more subjective and permanent,—a mood or an attitude which may enlarge into a definite interpretation of life. Of this interpretation the keynote is that Fate is ironical. In its unmitigated form this philosophy declares that there is a deviltry that misshapes our ends, construct them how we will. It is more often found, however, in a modi-

[1] *A Second Century Satirist*, 187. A translation by W. D. Sheldon.

fied creed which admits that the presence of this perverse element in existence does not prove that all life is of the same piece; that the mad pranks are those of destiny's underlings, dressed in a little brief authority, and not perpetrated by the ruler of the universe.

Such speculations lead into the realm of religion, and religion has had to provide a place in its pantheon for this spirit of disastrous caprice. There it lurks under various guises. Baal may fall asleep or go on a journey at a time most inauspicious for his followers. The behavior of the Olympians quite justifies the debate between Timocles and Damis, reported by Lucian, as to the theocratic mismanagement of the world. Setebos slays and saves with an eye single to the bewilderment of the human puppets. The presiding goddess in The House of Fame rewards and punishes with a similar unaccountability. "The gods," says Smollett [1] "not yet tired with sporting with the farce of human government, were still resolved to show by what inconsiderable springs a mighty empire may be moved." Sport is a need also of the President of the Immortals, and where so agreeably found as in undermining the patient structure of poor little Tess, and bringing it to the ground with a splendid crash?

The essence of an ironic circumstance lies in its apparently wanton thwarting by a narrow margin of a normal sequence in itself logical and desirable, or in an imposition of calamity on the same exasperating terms. Either it frustrates not merely what might have been but what almost was, or it brings to pass the disaster that was almost averted. It might come under the simpler caption of bad luck, except that not all bad luck is ironic; only a particular brand of it. Irony is the obverse side of that happy

[1] *Adventures of an Atom*, II, 121.

concatenation of events which we approvingly designate as Providential. The favoring and therefore the rational and commendable happening is an act of special providence. The contrary comes from the malicious mischief of the Aristophanes of Heaven.

In literature the ironic temper has acquitted itself with distinguished success. Among its contributions one recalls *The Dinner of Trimalchio*, *The Golden Ass* (and the medieval Burnellus), *Letters of Obscure Men*, *Praise of Folly*, *Gargantua*, *Don Quixote*, *The Gull's Hornbook*, *Knight of the Burning Pestle*, *A Modest Proposal*, *The Shortest Way with Dissenters*, *Candide*, *Jonathan Wild*, *Murder as a Fine Art*, *Castle Rackrent*, *Northanger Abbey*, *The Fair Haven*. A glance at the list shows the versatile nature of irony both as to form and idea, though its history taken as a whole has shown more predilection for the romantic than for the realistic method. It is an ingredient in all burlesque and caricature, and is on the other hand least necessary to an explicit presentation of reality, however full this last may be of implicit irony. Its consistent practice is to deceive, and this can more easily be accomplished through fantasy and symbolism. When, however, it is accomplished by more demure and disarming means, the deception is more thorough just because of taking the reader unaware. One is on guard against any form of the symbolic, knowing that some suspicious thing is therein concealed. But who would think of questioning a collection of letters, an essay or a treatise? Yet these are the culprits guilty of ruthlessly hoodwinking the trusting literal mind.

Ulrich von Hutten's *Epistolæ* were edited by Maittaire, and the edition reviewed by Steele (whom we should not expect to be caught napping), both taking them seriously.

Defoe's pilloried renown is well known. Butler's work "in Defense of the Miraculous Element in Our Lord's Ministry upon Earth," was solemnly greeted by the reviewers as a champion of orthodoxy, and sent by Canon Ainger to a friend he wished to convert. Swift and De Quincey have been condemned for abuse of children and encouragement of crime.

Misunderstanding of this sort is a triumph for irony, a test of success. But there are also signs of a misapprehension of the ironic disposition, especially as related to the satiric. Of this conception two modern critics afford examples. In the Introduction to his *Defoe*, Masefield remarks,—

"An ironical writer has always nobility of soul; a satirist has seldom any quality save greater baseness than his subject. An ironical writer knows the good; a satirist need only know the evil."

The superb eulogy of the first statement may be dismissed as a bit of rhetoric, but the doom pronounced in its corollary, is based on a double confusion; first between the ironist and the humorist, and second between the satirist and the misanthrope. In a recent discussion the same fallacy is promulgated at greater length: [1]

"The satirist is the aggressive lawyer, fastening upon particular people and particular qualities. But irony is no more personal than the sun that sends his flaming darts into the world. The satirist is a purely practical man, with a business instinct, bent on the main chance and the definite object. He is often brutal, and always overbearing; the ironist, never. Irony may wound from the very fineness and delicacy of the attack, but the wounding is incidental. The sole purpose of the satirist and the burlesquer is to wound; and they test their success by

[1] Randolph Bourne: *The Life of Irony*. *Atlantic*, III, 357.

the deepness of the wound. But irony tests its own by the amount of generous light and air it has set flowing through an idea or a personality, and the broad significance it has revealed in neglected things."

The only pertinent reply to such eloquence is one that may seem impertinent, namely, to refer the special pleader to a useful principle in argument greatly favored by a certain canny Greek dialectician, and quaintly restated in the eighteenth century: [1]

"If once it was expected by the Public that Authors should strictly *define* their Subjects, it would instantly cheque an Innundation of Scribbling. The *desultory* Manner of Writing would be absolutely exploded; and Accuracy and Precision would be necessarily introduced upon every Subject. * * * If Definitions had been constantly expected from Authors there would not have appeared one hundredth Part of the present Books, and yet every Subject had been better ascertained."

Irony, it is true, is defined by the essayist as "the science of comparative experience," but this attempt to fit a philosophic giant to the bed of his smaller ironic brother meets with the usual Procrustian result. As for the tribute to irony, a far more impressive one is paid in the almost casual utterance of Lamb, who makes it the climax of his enumeration of the blessings vouchsafed to mortality,—"and *irony itself*—do these things go out with life?"

In Victorian fiction the presence of this element is found very much as it is in life, unobstrusive but easily detectable. What Saintsbury says of Jane Austen would apply in varying degrees to her successors: [2]

[1] Corbyn Morris, in *An Essay towards fixing the True Standards of Wit, Humour, Raillery, Satire, and Ridicule.*

[2] *The English Novel*, 195.

"Precisely to what extent the attractive quality of this art is enhanced by the pervading irony of the treatment would be a very difficult problem to work out. It is scarcely hazardous to say that irony is the very salt of the novel; and that just as you put salt even in a cake, so it is not wise to neglect it wholly even in a romance. Life itself, as soon as it gets beyond mere vegetation, is notoriously full of irony; and no imitation of it which dispenses with the seasoning can be worth much."

This vital importance of what might be called negative value is suggested by the juvenile's definition of salt as "what makes your potato taste bad if there isn't any on it." It is just this fact, however, that allows the ironic to defy analysis. By itself one spoonful of salt is very much like another. The whole secret is in the combination. Its presence or absence gives one the immediate feeling of the little more and how much it is, the little less and how far away. But to segregate it for scrutiny is to destroy the charm of the savor.

Since such segregation must nevertheless be attempted for the sake of the information it may yield, it seems advisable to keep to the division already noted, and distinguish between verbal and philosophical irony as they exist in the novel. These correspond in a general way to the direct and the dramatic methods used in the larger field of satire.

Of ironic language we find practically none in Reade, very little in Kingsley, Mrs. Gaskell, and Charlotte Brontë, more frequent flashes in Lytton and Disraeli, increasing still more in Dickens and Trollope. In Peacock, Thackeray, Eliot, Meredith, and Butler, it is more pervasive, even when less in quantity, and representative of a consistent attitude.

As Mrs. Kirkpatrick-Gibson is Mrs. Gaskell's favorite

game, she constantly exposes her to ironic self-betrayal, and finally allows her disciplined husband the luxury of an ironic retort,—not in the lady's presence, of course, but by way of reply to his daughter Molly's anticipation of an orgy of freedom in her absence.[1]

"The doctor's eyes twinkled, but the rest of his face was perfectly grave. 'I'm not going to be corrupted. With toil and labour I've reached a very fair height of refinement. I won't be pulled down again.'"

Kingsley and Brontë are both incapable of this quiet banter, and can produce from their earnest souls only an awkward and angry sarcasm.

The Misses Sympson and the Misses Nunnely are asking whether Shirley's expressive manner of singing can be proper. [2]

"Was it proper? * * * Decidedly not: it was strange, it was unusual. What was *strange* must be *wrong;* what was *unusual* must be *improper.* Shirley was judged."

Alton Locke says of his own aspiration,[3]

"No doubt it was very self-willed and ambitious of me to do that which rich men's sons are flogged for not doing, and rewarded with all manner of prizes, scholarships, fellowships, for doing."

But in the midst of his bitterness he stops to remark,

"I really do not mean to be flippant or sneering. I have seen the evil of it as much as any man, in myself and in my own class."

The description in *Yeast* of the fight between the squire's retainers and the London poachers, which results

[1] *Wives and Daughters*, 397. [2] *Shirley*, I, 236. [3] *Alton Locke*, 58.

in the death of faithful old Harry Verney, concludes with this comment,—characteristic in that it breathes the spirit of irony but lacks its complete form.[1]

"And all the while the broad still moon stared down on them grim and cold, as if with a saturnine sneer at the whole humbug; and the silly birds about whom all this butchery went on, slept quietly over their heads, every one with his head under his wing. Oh! if the pheasants had but understanding, how they would split their sides with chuckling and crowing at the follies which civilized Christian men perpetrate for their precious sake!"

That Lytton should gain in poise and subtlety in the forty-five years intervening between *Pelham* and *Kenelm Chillingly* is to be expected, although the progression is by no means a steady one. Some of his most absurd sarcastic moralizing is found in *My Novel*, about midway in time,—particularly on the March of Enlightenment, with a smart sketch of half a dozen typical Marchers; and on liberal notions generally. And in the youthful volume are some very good touches, as this concerning his country uncle:[2]

"He was, as people justly observed, rather an odd man: built schools for peasants, forgave poachers, and diminished his farmers' rents; indeed, on account of these and similar eccentricities, he was thought a fool by some, and a madman by others."

This pales perceptibly, however, by the side of Peacock's firm and vivid treatment of the same subject, embodied in Squire Crochet:[3]

"He could not become, like a true-born English squire, part and parcel of the barley-giving earth; he could not find in

[1] *Yeast*, 158. [2] *Pelham*, 9. [3] *Crochet Castle*, 21.

game-bagging, poacher-shooting, trespasser-pounding, footpath-stopping, common-enclosing, rack-renting, and all the other liberal pursuits and pastimes which make a country gentleman an ornament to the world, and a blessing to the poor; he could not find in these valuable and amiable occupations, and in a corresponding range of ideas, nearly commensurate with that of the great king Nebuchadnezzer, when he was turned out to grass; he could not find in this great variety of useful action, and vast field of comprehensive thought, modes of filling up his time that accorded with his Caledonian instinct."

This in turn is quite equaled by Kenelm's coming-of-age speech, though his indictment of the genus squire is couched in unironical satire. Not that the youth was unacquainted with the uses of irony. At the age of nine he had had occasion to send a letter to a schoolmate, conveying his conviction of that lad's lack of intelligence. He had heard his father remark that a certain neighbor was an ass, and that he was going to write and tell him so. He made inquiries into the matter of phrasing such information. He received the following reply,—by which he profited most effectively in his own correspondence: [1]

"But you can not learn too early this fact, that irony is to the high-bred what billingsgate is to the vulgar; and when one gentleman thinks another gentleman is an ass, he does not say it point-blank—he implies it in the politest terms he can invent."

This principle is applied on a national scale in the discourse of the intruder among the Vrilya, whose situation resembles that of Gulliver eulogizing to the king of the Brobdingnagians the Institutions of England, except that Lytton does not blunt his irony by relapsing into plain terms, as Swift does in the "pernicious race of little odious vermin." The visitor waxes eloquent about America: [2]

[1] *Kenelm Chillingly*, 25. [2] *Coming Race*, 43.

"Naturally desiring to represent in the most favorable colors the world from which I came, I touched but slightly, though indulgently, on the antiquated and decaying institutions of Europe, in order to expatiate on the present grandeur and prospective pre-eminence of that glorious American Republic, in which Europe enviously sees its model and tremblingly foresees its doom. Selecting for an example of the social life of the United States that city in which progress advances at the fastest rate, I indulged in an animated description of the moral habits of New York. Mortified to see, by the faces of my listeners, that I did not make the favorable impression I had anticipated, I elevated my theme; dwelling on the excellence of democratic institutions, their promotion of tranquil happiness by the government of party, and the mode in which they diffused such happiness throughout the community by preferring, for the exercise of power and the acquisition of honors, the lowest citizens in point of property, education, and character."

This is the ironic version of Matthew Arnold's polished dubiety about majorities in *Numbers;* and of the robustious satire of Dickens. If we feel that Lytton excels the latter in pithy conciseness and allusive point, we have to remember that he was at this time more than twice the age of Dickens when *Martin Chuzzlewit* was written, and that in the intervening quarter century some improving changes had taken place in their common object of satire.

Disraeli's irony is less tangible and quotable. His favorite method is to hint at the implication in a burlesque comparison; as in the opening sentence of *The Young Duke:* [1]

[1] As an introduction this reminds one of the ironic terseness of Jane Austen: "It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife." (*Pride and Prejudice.*) And—"About thirty years ago, Miss Maria Ward, of Huntingdon, with only seven thousand pounds, had the good luck to captivate Sir Thomas Bertram, of Mansfield Park, in the county of Northampton, and to be thereby raised to the rank of

"George Augustus Frederick, Duke of Saint James, completed his twenty-first year, an event which created almost as great a sensation among the aristocracy of England as the Norman Conquest."

Later his toilette is described in terms of a campaign, concluding,[1]

"He assumes the look, the air that befit the occasion: cordial, but dignified; sublime, but sweet. He descends like a deity from Olympus to a banquet of illustrious mortals."

Tancred is introduced by an epic of the *chefs*. Prevost is discoursing to Leander (who will take no engagements but with crowned heads), of their profession and of Adrien, a neophyte: [2]

"'It is something to have served under Napoleon,' added Prevost, with the grand air of the Imperial kitchen. 'Had it not been for Waterloo, I should have had the cross. But the Bourbons and the cooks of the Empire never could understand each other. * * *

"'He is too young. I took him to Hellingsley, and he lost his head on the third day. I entrusted the souffles to him, and, but for the most desperate personal exertions all would have been lost. It was an affair of the bridge of Areola. * * * Ah! *mon Dieu!* those are moments!'"

Later the same functionary is scandalized at the diners' neglect of his colleague (shown in the failure to present him with tokens of esteem) when he had surpassed himself in a superb dinner: [3]

a baronet's lady, with all the comforts and consequences of a handsome house and large income." (*Mansfield Park.*)

[1] *The Young Duke*, 85. Cf. a similar account of Tom Towers, of *The Jupiter*, in Trollope's *Warden*.

[2] *Tancred*, 37.

[3] *Ibid.*, 37.

"How can he compose when he is not appreciated? Had he been appreciated he would today not only have repeated the *escalopes a la Bellamont*, but perhaps even invented what might have outdone it. * * * These things in themselves are nothing; but they prove to a man of genius that he is understood. Had Leander been in the Imperial kitchen, or even with the emperor of Russia, he would have been decorated!"

It transpires, however, that the artist's wounded feelings were soothed by a belated acknowledgment, accompanied by a tactful hint that he suffered in a good cause, and that as an esthetic missionary he should be lenient to the social delinquencies of the barbarians he ministered unto: [1]

"Was it nothing, by this development of taste, to assist in supporting that aristocratic influence which he wished to cherish, and which can alone encourage art?"

It is not to be supposed that this indicates the range of Disraeli's ideas, merely the subject on which he chiefly expends his ironic persiflage. A representative example of his more serious sarcasm is found in the second volume of his Young England Trilogy, the one most alive with social sympathy: [2]

"Infanticide is practised as extensively and as legally in England as it is on the banks of the Ganges; a circumstance which apparently has not yet engaged the attention of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts."

In Dickens and Trollope irony is a substantial though not exactly an integral element; more substantial in the former than the latter. We find ironic comment both direct, by the writer, and indirect, through ironic characters; and the still more indirect, in the betraying speech

[1] *Tancred*, 39. [2] *Sybil*, 113.

that relates facts true in a different sense from that meant by the speaker, thus conveying a reverse effect from the one intended.

A text for the first kind is furnished by Noah Claypole, the sordid bully and snob, prompt to retaliate on one still lower in the scale of circumstance than himself: [1]

"This affords charming food for contemplation. It shows us what a charming thing human nature may be made to be; and how impartially the same amiable qualities are developed in the finest lord and the dirtiest charity-boy."

Another is the Chuzzlewit Family, introduced by a long prologue of ironic symbolism. Specifically there is the eulogy of the head of the present branch of it: [2]

"Some people likened him to a direction post, which is always telling the way to a place, and never goes there: but these were his enemies; the shadows cast by his brightness; that was all."

Later in his illustrious career, he is upheld in his holy horror at the mercenary diplomacy of a landlady. Mr. Pecksniff rebukes,—

"Oh, Baal, Baal! Oh my friend, Mrs. Todgers! To barter away that precious jewel, self-esteem, and cringe to any mortal creature—for eighteen shillings a week!"

And Dickens echoes,[3]

"Eighteen shillings a week! Just, most just, they censure, upright Pecksniff! Had it been for the sake of a ribbon, star, or garter; sleeves of lawn, a great man's smile, a seat in parliament, a tap upon the shoulder from a courtly sword; a place, a party, or a thriving lie, or eighteen thousand pounds, or even eighteen hundred,—but to worship the golden calf for eighteen shillings a week! Oh pitiful, pitiful!"

[1] *Oliver Twist*, 42. [2] *Martin Chuzzlewit*, I, 17. [3] *Ibid.*, I, 234.

Two more characteristic instances may be cited. The first is concerning the failure of the firm of Dombey and Son. [1]

"The world was very busy now, forsooth, and had a deal to say. It was an innocently credulous and a much ill-used world. It was a world in which there was no other sort of bankruptcy whatever. There were no conspicuous people in it, trading far and wide on rotten banks of religion, patriotism, virtue, honor. There was no amount worth mentioning of mere paper in circulation, on which anybody lived pretty handsomely, promising to pay great sums of goodness with no effects. There were no shortcomings anywhere, in anything but money. The world was very angry indeed; and the people especially who, in a worse world, might have been supposed to be bankrupt traders themselves in shows and pretenses, were observed to be mightily indignant."

The second is anent the Whelp, Tom Gradgrind.[2]

"It was very remarkable that a young gentleman who had been brought up under the continuous system of unnatural restraint, should be a hypocrite; but it was certainly the case with Tom. It was very strange that a young gentleman who had never been left to his own guidance for five consecutive minutes, should be incapable at last of governing himself; but so it was with Tom. It was altogether unaccountable that a young gentleman whose imagination had been strangled in his cradle, should be still inconvenienced by its ghost in the form of grovelling sensualities; but such a monster, beyond all doubt, was Tom."

In character we have a range from the vulgar, vigorous sarcasm of Mr. Panks [3] to the languid patrician banter of

[1] *Dombey and Son*, II, 416. Cf. the Musical Banks of Erewhon.

[2] *Hard Times*, 156.

[3] Arthur Clennam had remarked that the patriarchal Mr. Casby is a fine old fellow. Mr. Panks snorts a bitter concurrence of opinion:

Sir John Chester, exercised on the uncomprehending Sim Tappertit and Gabriel Varden. There are also ironic touches in the two heroes, Martin Chuzzlewit and David Copperfield.

The most delightful pictures of those who entertain irony unaware are Mr. Bumble, Mr. Squeers, Mr. Turveydrop, Mrs. Skewton, Mrs. Nickleby, and Mrs. Pardiggle.

Entrenched in wisdom, these philosophers all enunciate profound truths about life.

The beadle discovers the illimitable vistas of human desires, together with the unreasonable expectation of having them gratified. He laments the ingratitude of the pauper who, in antiparochial weather, having been granted bread and cheese, has the audacity to ask for a bit of fuel.[1]

"That's the way with these people, ma'am; give 'em a apron full of coals today, and they'll come back for another, the day after tomorrow, as brazen as alabaster."

The pedagogue learns that parental prejudice sometimes extends to an extravagant pampering of offspring, even carried so far as an absurd opposition to wholesome discipline. Summoned to London on some bothering law business for what was called the neglect of a boy, he explains to the sympathetic Ralph Nickleby that the lad had as good grazing as there was to be had.[2]

"When a boy gets weak and ill and don't relish his meals, we give him a change of diet—turn him out, for an hour or so every day, into a neighbor's turnip-field, or sometimes, if it's

"Noble old boy, an't he? * * * generous old buck. Confiding old boy. Philanthropic old buck. Benevolent old boy! Twenty per cent I engaged to pay him, sir. But we never do business for less, at our shop." *Little Dorrit*, I, 554.

[1] *Oliver Twist*, 219.

[2] *Nicholas Nickleby*, II, 26.

a delicate case, a turnip-field and a piece of carrots alternately, and let him eat as many as he likes. There an't better land in the county than this perwerse lad grazed on, and yet he goes and catches cold and indigestion and what not, and then his friends brings a lawsuit against *me!*"

The Professor of Deportment, not subject to these sordid contacts, inhales a more rarified atmosphere, and recognizes the value of a *succes d'estime*, sufficient to compensate for neglect on the part of a stupid public.[1]

"It may not be for me to say that I have been called, for some years now, Gentleman Turveydrop; or that His Royal Highness, the Prince Regent, did me the honour to inquire, on my removing my hat as he drove out of the Pavilion at Brighton (that fine building), 'Who is he? Who the devil is he? Why don't I know him? Why hasn't he thirty thousand a year?' But these are little matters of anecdote—the general property, ma'am,—still repeated, occasionally, among the upper classes."

The contributions of the ladies seem to be along psychological rather than social or sociological lines. Mrs. Nickleby is plaintively aware of the thistle-ball nature of the masculine mind, fixed by no friendly star, though the star was not wanting. She discerns on the part of her son a certain inattentiveness to her remarks.[2]

"But that was always the way with your poor dear papa,—just his way—always wandering, never able to fix his thoughts on any one subject for two minutes together. I think I see him now! * * * looking at me while I was talking to him about his affairs, just as if his ideas were in a state of perfect conglomeration! Anybody who had come in upon us suddenly would have supposed I was confusing and distracting him instead of making things plainer; upon my word they would."

[1] *Bleak House*, 195.

[2] *Nicholas Nickleby*, II, 85.

Mrs. Skewton and Mrs. Pardiggle have solved the secret of a happy life, but by different ways. The former perceives it to spring from scholarship vivified by enthusiasm for the fascinating perspectives of history.[1]

"Those darling bygone times, Mr. Carker, * * * with their delicious fortresses, and their dear old dungeons, and their delightful places of torture, and their romantic vengeances, and their picturesque assaults and sieges, and everything that makes life truly charming! How dreadfully we have degenerated. * * * We have no faith in the dear old barons, who were the most delightful creatures—or in the dear old priests, who were the most warlike of men—or even in the days of that inestimable Queen Bess, which were so extremely golden! Dear creature! She was all heart! And that charming father of hers! I hope you dote on Henry the Eighth!"

The latter, on the other hand, lives in the present, is attuned to the *carpe diem* idea, and realizes the joy of self-expression and the exhilaration of labor.[2]

"I freely admit, I am a woman of business. I love hard work; I enjoy hard work. The excitement does me good. I am so accustomed and inured to hard work, that I don't know what fatigue is. * * * This gives me a great advantage when I am making my rounds. If I find a person unwilling to hear what I have to say, I tell that person directly, 'I am incapable of fatigue, my good friend, I am never tired, and I mean to go on till I have done.' It answers admirably!"

In contrast to the various methods of Dickens, Trollope practically confines himself to direct comment. His favorite topics are politics and society. As to the former, radical iconoclasm is described in the person of Mr. Turnbull.[3]

[1] *Dombey and Son*, 433. [2] *Bleak House*, 105.

[3] *Phineas Finn*, I, 214. In the story same Lady Glencora uses the Socratic method on Mrs. Bonteen to make her admit she is really an advocate of social equality.

"Having nothing to construct, he could always deal with generalities. Being free from responsibility, he was not called upon either to study details or to master even great facts. * * * Mr. Monk had once told Phineas Finn how great were the charms of that inaccuracy which was permitted to the Opposition."

The always useful ironic device of simply delineating one's objects with brushes and colors of their own, of presenting them as they see themselves, is used in one episode both on an institution and an individual. The Press reacts to the appointment of a scoundrel to the Cabinet.[1]

"The *Jupiter*, with withering scorn, had asked whether vice of every kind was to be considered, in these days of Queen Victoria, as a passport to the cabinet. Adverse members of both Houses had arrayed themselves in a pure panoply of morality, and thundered forth their sarcasms with the indignant virtue and keen discontent of political Juvenals."

Nevertheless, the new incumbent enjoys his emoluments.[2]

"Now, as he stood smiling on the hearthrug of his official fireplace, it was quite pleasant to see the kind, patronizing smile which lighted up his features. He delighted to stand there, with his hands in his trousers pocket, the great man of the place, conscious of his lordship, and feeling himself every inch a minister."

With reference to what was then a new policy of administration, he employs ironic exhortation.[3]

"Let every place in which a man can hold up his head be the reward of some antagonistic struggle, of some grand compet-

[1] *Framley Parsonage*, 180.

[2] *Ibid.*, 183. Cf. Heine's remark of Louis Phillipe, that he "rose in solid majesty, every pound a king."

[3] *The Bertrams*, 6. There are pages in this strain.

itive examination. Let us get rid of the fault of past ages. With us, let the race be ever to the swift, and victory always to the strong. And let us always be racing, so that the swift and strong shall ever be known among us. But what, then, for those who are not swift, not strong? *Væ victis!* Let them go to the wall. They can hew wood, probably; or, at any rate, draw water."

The thing in society which Trollope apparently finds most open to ironic treatment is the commercializing of marriage. In one place this takes the form of sage advice.[1]

"There is no doubt but that the privilege of matrimony offers opportunities to money loving young men which ought not to be lightly abused. Too many young men marry without giving any consideration to the matter whatever. * * * A man can be young but once, and, except in cases of a special interposition of Providence, can marry but once. The chance, once thrown away, may be said to be irrecoverable. * * * Half that trouble, half that care, a tithe of that circumspection would, in early youth, have probably secured to them the enduring comforts of a wife's wealth. * * * There is no road to wealth so easy and respectable as that of matrimony; that is, of course, provided that the aspirant declines the slow course of honest work."

However, in default of golden attractions, a wife may have other assets. Griselda Grantly had neither houses nor land, neither title nor position. But Lord Dumbello had all these, and needed only a lay figure for lovely clothes to grace his establishment; the more icily regular and splendidly null, the better.[2]

"But a handsome woman at the head of your table, who knows how to dress and how to sit, and how to get in and out of her carriage—who will not disgrace her lord by her ignorance,

[1] *Dr. Thorne*, 207. [2] *Framley Parsonage*, 477.

or fret him by her coquetry, or disparage him by her talent—how beautiful a thing it is! For my own part I think that Griselda Grantly was born to be the wife of a great English peer."

It is comforting to know that in the midst of these lofty circles the daughter of the archdeacon did not lose the virtue of humility; for we read in a subsequent narrative: [1]

"But, now and again, since her august marriage, she had laid her coronated head upon one of the old rectory pillows for a night or two, and on such occasions all the Plumsteadians had been loud in praise of her condescension."

The difference between the novelists just discussed and the remaining half of the list, in the use of irony, is more easily perceived than defined. It can only be suggested by metaphor. Confectionery may be flavored, for instance with citron in lumps or liquid peppermint. It is evident that the former is more visible and detachable, but that the latter affects more pervasively the quality of the product. In the concoctions already mentioned, from Lytton to Trollope, it is easy enough to stick in one's thumb and pull out a plum. All the plums being pulled out, the character of the remaining portion would not be radically changed. But peppermint cannot be extracted except by a process of chemical dissolution; and if it could, the taste of the whole would be altered. Yet it is not patent to eye or finger, though not wanting in stimulus to other senses. These two ingredients, however, are not mutually exclusive. The permeated may also be sufficiently glomerate to permit of some dissection; only the operation is less fully explanatory of the whole.

For example, we may extract from Peacock his description of the Abbey of Rubygill, situated— [2]

[1] *Last Chronicles*, 16.

[2] *Maid Marian*, 15.

"* * * in a spot which seemed adapted by nature to be the retreat of monastic mortification, being on the banks of a fine trout-stream, and in the midst of woodland coverts, abounding with excellent game."

Or of the sword of Matilda, which went— [1]

"* * * nigh to fathom even that extraordinary depth of brain which always by divine grace furnishes the interior of a head-royal."

Or the reply of Mr. Cypress to Dr. Folliott's statement of the Brotherhood of Man: [2]

"Yes, sir, as the hangman is of the thief; the squire of the poacher; the judge of the libeller; the lawyer of his client; the statesman of his colleague; the bubble-blower of the bubble-buyer; the slave-driver of the negro: as these are brethren, so am I and the worthies in question."

But this would give little idea of Peacock's prevailing attitude,—a cheerfully sardonic amusement at the state of human affairs, expressed most frequently by means of an ironic juxtaposition of Past and Present.

Less cheerful and more sardonic is the smile with which Butler greets life and its follies. He is classed with Peacock as a romanticist in method, but is more akin to Swift in temper and manner than to any Victorian. The reader's mind must be kept taut in the constant process of translating the assumed pose into the real meaning. Under the grave disapproval of the Erewhonian treatment of disease or any misfortune, and crime, each being discussed in the terms we apply to the other, lurks the reversed judgment. Nothing short of complete presentation, especially of the chapters on Current Opinions, Some Ere-

[1] *Maid Marian*, 96. [2] *Crochet Castle*, 90.

whonian Trials, The Musical Banks, and The Colleges of Unreason, could convey an adequate impression.

A representative sample, however, is found in the retort of the judge who pronounces sentence on the youth "charged with having been swindled out of a large property during his minority by his guardian." The defendant puts up the plea natural under the circumstances, and is promptly instructed not to talk nonsense: [1]

"People have no right to be young, inexperienced, greatly in awe of their guardians, and without independent professional advice. If by such indiscretions they outrage the moral sense of their friends, they must expect to suffer accordingly."

Later a thorough exposition of this legal philosophy is given in a long judicial oration preceding the doom of a prisoner found guilty of pulmonary consumption. A few excerpts show the trend of the argument.[2]

"It is all very well for you to say that you came of unhealthy parents, and had a severe accident in your childhood which permanently undermined your constitution; excuses such as these are the ordinary refuge of the criminal; but they cannot for one moment be listened to by the ear of justice. * * * There is no question of how you came to be wicked, but only this—namely, are you wicked or not? * * * It is intolerable that an example of such terrible enormity should be allowed to go at large unpunished. Your presence in the society of respectable people would lead the less able-bodied to think more lightly of all forms of illness; * * * A time of universal dephysicalization would ensue; medicine vendors of all kinds would abound in our streets and advertise in all our newspapers. * * * If you tell me that you had no hand in your parentage and education, * * * I answer that whether your being in a consumption is your fault or no, it is

[1] *Erewhon*, 110. [2] *Ibid.*, 113–116.

a fault in you, and it is my duty to see that against such faults as this the commonwealth shall be protected. You may say that it is your misfortune to be criminal; I answer that it is your crime to be unfortunate."

This is a fit successor to the marvelous "Let no man" conclusion to the *Modest Proposal.*

Another unomittable instance is the account of a religious reformation. The visitor hints to a Musical Bank manager that the popular reliance on that currency was rather perfunctory, and that the other financial system, ostensibly flouted, was the real repository of coin and confidence.[1]

"He said that it had been more or less true till lately, but that now they had put fresh stained glass windows into all the banks in the country, and repaired the buildings, and enlarged the organs; the presidents, moreover, had taken to riding in omnibuses and talking nicely to people in the streets, and to remembering the ages of their children, and giving them things when they were naughty, so that all would henceforth go smoothly.

"'But haven't you done anything to the money itself?' said I, timidly.

"'It is not necessary,' he rejoined; 'not in the least necessary, I assure you.'"

One citation also from Butler's novel is irresistible, particularly as it reminds one of Trollope's practical admonition to young men contemplating matrimony. This is on the subject of domestic discipline.[2]

[1] *Erewhon,* 153. Butler's ability to deliver the casual nudge as well as the deliberate blow is shown in a feature of the prison régime; convict labor is required,—a trade already learned, if possible, otherwise—"if he be a gentleman born and bred to no profession, he must pick oakum, or write art criticisms for a newspaper." 126.

[2] *The Way of All Flesh,* 26.

"To parents who wish to lead a quiet life I would say: Tell your children that they are very naughty—much naughtier than most children. Point to the young people of some acquaintances as models of perfection and impress your own children with a deep sense of their own inferiority. You carry so many more guns than they do that they cannot fight you. This is called moral influence, and it will enable you to bounce them as much as you please. * * * Say that you have their highest interests at stake whenever you are out of temper and wish to make yourself unpleasant by way of balm to your soul. Harp much upon these highest interests."

Thackeray is placed in the group of dyed-in-the-wool ironists mainly because he does not belong in the other. One somehow acquires the impression that ironic sayings will be plentiful as blackberries; but when one actually goes berrying, he finds the crop strangely vanished. Lacking the grave, dry, imperturbable manner and the consistently preserved attitude, he cannot avoid the temptation of relapsing into the literal and giving self-conscious explanations, as in *Barry Lyndon*, and *Catherine*. This produces something of the effect of Lydgate's ironic titles,—*So as the Crabbe goeth forward*, and *As Straight as a Ram's Horn*,—followed by perfectly serious moralizing. Probably nothing would astonish or distress Thackeray more than to have his humor rated as the humor of Lytton, Reade, or Kingsley; nor would this indeed be quite fair to him. Yet his lack of real spontaneity classifies him with them rather than with Dickens or Trollope, and his lack of finish and subtlety prevents him from being ranked with Peacock, Eliot, Meredith or Butler. His ironic phrasing has too often the flat, shallow sound of the man determined to be clever. Such, for instance, is the comment on the plutocratic Miss Crawley: [1]

[1] *Vanity Fair*, I, 115.

"She had a balance at the banker's which would have made her beloved anywhere. * * * What a dignity it gives an old lady, that balance at the banker's!"

Such also is this demolishing assault upon worldliness: [1]

"I, for my part, have known a five pound note to interpose and knock up a half century's attachment between two brethren; and can't but admire, as I think what a fine and durable thing Love is among worldly people."

And this upon a shoddy *noblesse oblige:* [2]

"I admire that admiration which the genteel world sometimes extends to the commonalty. There is no more agreeable object in life than to see May Fair folks condescending."

When he gravely admonishes, it is as follows: [3]

"Praise everybody, I say to such; never be squeamish, but speak out your compliment both point blank to a man's face, and behind his back, when you know there is a reasonable chance of his hearing it again."

The direct satire on Pitt Crawley as an undergraduate is given an ironic fillip by another sting in the tail: [4]

"But though he had a fine flux of words, and delivered his little voice with great pomposity and pleasure to himself, and never advanced any sentiment or opinion which was not perfectly trite and stale, and supported by a Latin quotation; yet he failed somehow, in spite of a mediocrity which ought to have insured any man a success."

Another successful bit,—this time the device of catching an unwary character in an ironic trap,—is the account of Penn's linguistic proficiency. His friend Strong compliments him on speaking French like Chateaubriand,— [5]

[1] *Vanity Fair*, I, 128. [2] *Ibid.*, 192. [3] *Ibid*, 255. [4] *Ibid*, 110.
[5] *Pendennis*, II, 22.

"'I've been accustomed to it from my youth upwards,' said Pen; and Strong had the grace not to laugh for five minutes, when he exploded into fits of hilarity which Pen has never, perhaps, understood up to this day."

In her preface to the second edition of *Jane Eyre*, Charlotte Brontë said that Thackeray resembled Fielding "as an eagle does a vulture;" and also compared the former to a Hebrew prophet. Putting aside the injustice to Fielding (happily atoned for by the author of *Middlemarch*, thereby restoring the average in feminine criticism) one is moved to reply that if any Victorian shoulders received the mantle of Elijah they were undoubtedly the firm-muscled ones of George Eliot. Hers is the union of native, smoldering wit and tremendous moral earnestness that marked the ancient Semitic race and reappeared in the modern Saxon. The downright seriousness which constitutes her main mood is tinctured but lightly with the ironic tone, but its pungency is well distributed. Its appearance is characterized by brevity and frequency. There are no long passages of sustained irony; and no very long ones wholly devoid of it. It usually occurs in quiet, unostentatious phrases, as in the description of the Raveloe philosophy, or of that superior family whose daughters bloomed into the Mesdames Deane, Glegg, Pullet, and Tulliver.

The cogitative Mr. Glegg, for instance, had a truly scientific attitude toward the captious temper that enlivened his home,— [1]

"* * * it is certain that an acquiescent mild wife would have left his meditations comparatively jejune and barren of mystery."

[1] *Mill on the Floss*, I, 189.

Mrs. Waule, on the other hand, was an acquiescent mild soul, and accepted domestic frankness as in the order of nature,— [1]

"Indeed, she herself was accustomed to think that entire freedom from the necessity of behaving agreeably was included in the Almighty's intentions about families."

From this banter we pass to a bitter sarcasm that covers a burning social sympathy in the account of the Florentine banquet, where none could eat the tough, expensive peacock, but all gloried in the extravagance of having it to play with,— [2]

"And it would have been rashness to speak slightingly of peacock's flesh, or any other venerable institution at a time when Fra Girolamo was teaching the disturbing doctrine that it was not the duty of the rich to be luxurious for the sake of the poor."

Irony is applied to two young men, with totally different purposes; in one case it is directed against the youth himself; in the other, against an anticipated criticism of his conduct.

Fred Vincy belongs to the class of which Algernon Blancove is the most brilliant representative, and from which Evan Harrington made an early escape. He is persuaded that he "wouldn't have been such a bad fellow if he had been rich." But his destiny induces in him "a streak of misanthropic bitterness." [3]

"To be born the son of a Middlemarch manufacturer, and the inevitable heir to nothing in particular, while such men as

[1] *Middlemarch*, I, 161. This book is also pervaded by the exuberant presence of the versatile but cautious Mr. Brooke, who had always "gone a good deal into that at one time," but always wisely refrained from pushing it too far, as one never can tell where such things will lead.

[2] *Romola*, II, 523.

[3] *Middlemarch*, I, 179.

Mainwaring and Vyan—certainly life was a poor business, when a spirited young fellow, with a good appetite for the best of everything, had so poor an outlook."

Of contrasting caliber is Adam Bede, whose vision is turned outward and even upward, instead of altogether inward; and whose survey causes a feeling of modesty rather than injured conceit.[1]

"Adam, I confess, was very susceptible to the influence of rank, and quite ready to give an extra amount of respect to every one who had more advantages than himself, not being a philosopher, or a proletaire with democratic ideas, but simply a stout-limbed clever carpenter with a large fund of reverence in his nature, which inclined him to admit all established claims unless he saw very clear grounds for questioning them."

George Eliot was held in high esteem by George Meredith; and the two were indeed akin in outlook, and very much so in the matter of ironic usage, in spite of their wide difference in general style. But the Meredithian solution is at once more saturated and more subtle, combined with greater uniformity of effect. This, however, does not spell monotony, diversity being furnished by range of ideas and breadth of subject-matter. Meredith has one ironic mold, but into it he pours a procession of contents of great variety. The tone, it is unnecessary to say, is undilutedly masculine; so is Eliot's, except for the presence of an element usually reckoned as feminine, and mentioned, by a curious coincidence, in Meredith's approving characterization of a French writer. In making out his own preferred list with accompanying reason, he cites Renan, "for a delicate irony scarcely distinguishable from tender-

[1] *Adam Bede*, I, 245. It could not be said of him as it was of Vincy in the above connection, —"The difficult task of knowing another soul is not for young gentlemen whose consciousness is chiefly made up of their own wishes."

ness." [1] In this quality Meredith was by no means lacking, but his ironic mood was inclined to the caustic and merciless.

One of his devices is to substitute for the old mock-heroic a new mock-syllogistic, more in accord with modern imagination. The great doctrine of Natural Selection is applied to human courtship, as exemplified by one of the Fittest.[2]

"Science thus—or it is better to say, an acquaintance with science—facilitates the cultivation of aristocracy. Consequently a successful pursuit and a wresting of her from a body of competitors, tells you that you are the best man. What is more, it tells the world so.

"Willoughby aired his amiable superlatives in the eye of Miss Middleton; he had a leg."

Under the seductive opportunity of table talk Sir Willoughby again falls a victim to the inductive method. This time he is airing his opinion of the French, drawing an elaborate analogy from the character of a national sample now officiating in the Patterne kitchen. The general validity of his conclusion is admitted by his modest secretary: [3]

"'A few trifling errors are of no consequence when you are in the vein of satire,' said Vernon. 'Be satisfied with knowing a nation in the person of a cook.'"

But Sir Willoughby still has twin peaks of eminence to surmount: one he achieves when he describes himself to

[1] *Letters*, II, 501. In another he speaks of the fine irony of French criticism, which "instructs without wounding any but the vanitous person": and adds that "England has little criticism beyond the expression of likes and dislikes, the stout vindication of an old conservatism of taste." *Ibid.*, 569.

[2] *The Egoist*, 43. (The "leg" of course referring to Mrs. Jenkinson's famous epigram).

[3] *The Egoist*, 113.

Lætitia as a man of humor; and the other when he warns Clara to beware of marrying an egoist.

Perhaps the two best understudies in egoism are Wilfred Pole and Victor Radnor. Wilfred is satisfied with the talents and charm of his Emilia. And yet [1]

"It was mournful to think that Circumstances had not at the same time created the girl of noble birth, or with an instinct for spiritual elegance. But the world is imperfect."

Both have lofty conceptions of loyalty and sacrifice. In the case of Wilfred,[2]

"He could pledge himself to eternity, but shrank from being bound to eleven o'clock on the morrow morning."

Victor is convinced of his love for Nataly,[3]

"And he tested it to prove it by his readiness to die for her: which is heroically easier than the devotedly living, and has a weight of evidence in our internal Courts for surpassing the latter tedious performance."

The occasion of the splendid housewarming at Lakelands is made into a text on the perils of feminism. In a crowded hall—[4]

"Chivalry stood. It is a breeched abstraction, sacrificing voluntarily and genially to the Fair, for a restoring of the balance between the sexes, that the division of good things be rather in the fair ones' favor as they are to think: with the warning to them, that the establishment of their claim for equality puts an end to the priceless privileges of petticoats. Women must be mad, to provoke such a warning; and the majority of them submissively show their good sense." ("With that

[1] *Sandra Belloni*, 157.
[2] *Ibid.*, 153.
[3] *One of Our Conquerors*, 415.
[4] *Ibid.*, 195.

innate submissiveness," speaks up George Eliot, "of the goose, so beautifully corresponding to the strength of the gander.")

Another evidence of bewildering perversity is equally apposite to the present moment of history. The Austrian Lieutenant Jenna is discoursing on the Italians and the habit of the captured of spending their enforced solitude in writing Memoirs: [1]

"My father said—the stout old Colonel—'Prisons seem to make these Italians take an interest in themselves.' 'Oh!' says my mother, 'why can't they be at peace with us?' 'That's exactly the question,' says my father, 'we're always putting to them.' And so I say. Why can't they let us smoke our cigars in peace?"

But England does not lag behind in the matter of the application of the intellect to practical questions. The country squires are excited over the approach of the open game season; moreover,— [2]

"The entire land (signifying all but all of those who occupy the situation of thinkers in it) may be said to have been exhaling the same thought in connection with September. Our England holds possession of a considerable portion of the globe, and it keeps the world in awe to see her bestowing so considerable a portion of intelligence upon her recreations. To prosecute them with her whole heart is an ingenious exhibition of her power."

It is naturally the fate of the active to suffer from Philistine misapprehension, particularly when the activity is racial: [3]

[1] *Vittoria*, 373.

[2] *Beauchamp's Career*, 369.

[3] *Sandra Belloni*, 68. This is followed by a fling at the "alliance with Destiny", which reminds us of our recent American slogan of "Manifest Destiny."

"Foreigners pertinaciously misunderstand us. They have the barbarous habit of judging by results. Let us know ourselves better. It is melancholy to contemplate the intrigues, and vile designs, and vengeances of other nations; and still more so, after we have written so many pages of intelligible history, to see them attributed to us. Will it never be perceived that we do not sow the thing that happens?"

This rhetorical irony, which we have found so widely distributed, is a sign of temperament at the most, and at the least only of habit,—a mannerism of style. Philosophical irony, a sense of the irony of life, is an indicator of character and the whole interpretation of experience. The two kinds may or may not coincide. It happens, for instance, that the two great ironists who inclose the Victorian period like a pair of chronological brackets, illustrate them separately. Jane Austen is habitually ironic in speech, but no novel of hers manifests an idea of the irony of fate. Her situations are too simple, too blandly logical, to be devised by a Destiny either impishly malicious or cruelly malignant. But Thomas Hardy takes all his reasonable logic and bland simplicity out in language. He seldom introduces the caustic reflection. There is little of the acrid in the flavor of his style. It is all poured into the story. The conditions he portrays convey their own poignancy, and tell their own tale of gratuitous failure and superfluous sacrifice.

Of this sharp impression of life as consisting of the nearly-achieved or barely-failed, there are indications here and there in mid-century fiction, but no thoroughgoing exponent, because none of that unqualified pessimism which acknowledges irrationality as the presiding genius of the world. It is natural that in Disraeli, Brontë, Kingsley, circumstantial irony should be as snakes in Iceland;

and that Lytton, Gaskell, Dickens, Thackeray, Reade, should furnish a pair of white crows apiece. It is interesting though also not astonishing to find that out of about three dozen culled examples, Peacock and Butler not counted because they do not work in the medium of normal circumstance, Meredith leads with nearly one-third the total amount, Eliot being a close second, and Trollope a lagging third. Yet these three are decidedly anti-ironic in general belief; shown both by actual testimony and by implication. The former comes, as would be supposed, from Meredith. Writing to a friend and alluding to the weakness of old age, he says,— [1]

"We who have loved the motion of legs and the sweep of the winds, we come to this. But for myself, I will own that it is the natural order. There is no irony in Nature."

In his last novel he gives a backhanded thrust at the ironic philosophy in his favorite equivocal fashion: [2]

"We are convinced we have proof of Providence intervening when some terrific event of the number at its disposal accomplishes the thing and no more than the thing desired."

In the same story the motive and emotion of the bridegroom is thus described: [3]

"A sour relish of the irony in his present position sharpened him to devilish enjoyment of it, as the finest form of loathing: * * * He had cried for Romance—here it was!"

But the author makes it clear that this irony is subjective. The objective complement to it arrives later, and its real name is Nemesis.

[1] *Letters*, II, 555. To Leslie Stephen, 1904.
[2] *An Amazing Marriage*, 480.
[3] *Ibid.*, 147. Cf. also citations in the first part of this chapter.

Subjective also is it in the one account we have from George Eliot: [1]

"But anyone watching keenly the stealthy convergence of human lots, sees a slow preparation of effects from one life on another, which tells like a calculated irony on the indifference or the frozen stare with which we look at our unintroduced neighbor. Destiny stands by sarcastic with our *dramatis personæ* folded in her hand."

That is, our ignorance makes a dramatic irony out of a situation in itself a link in the logical chain of cause and effect.

The implication that to the Victorians life is on the whole rational rather than ironic is made by the fact that the ironic situations are incidental, and the conclusions are based on poetic justice, whether happy or tragic, and not on ironic injustice. It may be worth noting that these various situations seem divisible into three or four classes, and that such division serves to bring some order out of the chaos of their multiplicity.

There is first the irony already mentioned as dramatic, where ignorance is not bliss. Such is the case in Lytton's *Alice*, when Maltravers falls in love with his own unknown daughter, an Œdipean tragedy being averted by timely information. A similar relationship with opposite effect is that of Harold Transome, exasperating with warnings of exposure the slippery scoundrel Jermyn, until he forces the incredible exposure of his own social position. Even more ironic is that behavior which in ignorant zeal pre-

[1] *Middlemarch*, I, 142. She also comments as follows on the undeniably just statement of Jermyn to Mrs. Transome that Harold should be told the secret of his birth:

"Perhaps some of the most terrible irony of the human lot is this of a deep truth coming to be uttered by lips that have no right to it." *Felix Holt*, II, 242.

cipitates the very calamity it strives to avoid. Thus does Mrs. Tulliver, "a hen taking to reflection on how to prevent Hodge from wringing her neck," when she adroitly tries to persuade Wakem not to buy the Mill, thereby putting the notion of doing it into his head. Lady Glencora, in *Phineas Finn*, pleading with Madame Max not to marry the Duke of Omnium, unaware of her already made decision not to do so, very nearly meets with the same kind of gratuitious failure. Of a different order is the use of secret knowledge to extract an advantage from the ignorant adversary who misunderstands the allusions; as Sandra Belloni, arousing Mr. Pole's enthusiasm for her as a daughter-in-law, good enough for any man indeed,—except his unsuspected self, who was the only one desired. At three fine banquets dramatic irony sits as an unwelcome guest: at Arthur Donnithorne's birthday feast, where the warm tribute paid him by Adam Bede and Mr. Poyser would have turned to ashes in their mouths had they known the truth; at Mr. Vane's dinner for Peg Woffington, at which his innocent wife appears just in time to assume all the honors to herself; and at the Jocelyn party, where the daughters of the great Mel have him to digest.

Another sort of irony comes from the reversed wheel of fortune. This is also dramatic, being in fact the keynote of the mediæval idea of tragedy, though all such reversal is not ironic. Authur Clennam in the Marshalsea might be an instance, albeit less perfect than William Dorrit fancying himself there when he was really in the perfectly appointed Merdle dining room. There is a double reversal of expectation that turns Fred Vincy into a passable success, through being cheated out of his legacy, while Dorothea Brooke and Tertius Lydgate are thwarted into comparative failure. Another subdivision is that com-

plete fall in which the victim does, and gladly, the thing he has previously sworn he would in no wise ever do; witness Sir Willoughby in triumph over the winning of the lady with brains, afterward to learn "the nature of that possession in the woman who is our wife."

Then there is the granted desire; as if mother Fate hearing her children beg for poisoned candy said, Well, take it then, and see how you like it. Lady Mason, in *Orley Farm*, Mrs. Transome, Sir Richard Feverel, are all devoted parents who are allowed to have their own way in plans for their children, and merely asked to abide by the consequences. The death of Raffles comes most opportunely for Mr. Bulstrode, and seals his doom.

The irony of the lost opportunity is hard to distinguish from just retribution. Philip Beaufort, killed on his way to a belated deed of duty to his family; Trollope's Claverings and Bertrams; Godfrey Cass, Lord Fleetwood, Edward Blancove, all are made to feel the ironic undercurrent of that water the mill will never grind with, because it has passed.

In addition to these *exempla*, attention might be called to a trio of ironic titles: *Great Expectations*, *Beauchamp's Career*, and *One of Our Conquerers*.

Though all the novelists indulge at times in the use of irony, Meredith alone offers a definition. In one place in the *Essay on Comedy*, he characterizes it as the honeyed sting which leaves the victim in doubt as to having been hurt. In another, he expands the idea:

> "Irony is the humour of satire; it may be savage as in Swift, with a moral object, or sedate, as in Gibbon, with a malicious. The foppish irony fretting to be seen, and the irony which leers, that you shall not mistake its intention, are failures in satiric effort pretending to the treasures of ambiguity."

Some there are who are not quite guiltless of these failures, but Meredith is not one of them. He is unique also, except for the corroboration of George Eliot, in making the ironic interpretation of life in itself an object of satire, in so far as it is brought forward as an excuse for our deficiencies, for then it betrays a certain weakness in our mental processes. For this he has one direct spokesman and two or three dramatic examples. The former is the incisive Redworth, who is exasperated at this vicarious refuge claimed by needy human nature.[1]

"'Upon my word,' he burst out, 'I should like to write a book of Fables, showing how donkeys get into grinding harness, and dogs lose their bones, and fools have their sconces cracked, and all run jabbering of the irony of Fate, to escape the annoyance of tracing the causes. And what are they? Nine times out of ten, plain want of patience, or some debt for indulgence, * * * It's the seed we sow, individually or collectively.'"

Chief of the latter,—the dramatic examples,—is a youth who, just returning from his father's funeral, with bitter prospects ahead, encounters a being more wretched than himself, a forsaken young woman shelterless, and desperately ill.[2]

"Evan had just been accusing the heavens of conspiring to disgrace him. Those patient heavens had listened, as is their wont. They had viewed and not been disordered by his mental frenzies. It is certainly hard that they do not come down to us, and condescend to tell us what they mean, and be dumb-foundered by the perspicuity of our arguments—the argument, for instance, that they have not fashioned us for the science of the shears, and do yet impel us to wield them."

[1] *Diana of the Crossways*, 423. [2] *Evan Harrington*, 117.

A little later in the same story is a bit of "eloquent and consoling philosophy" on a happy juxtaposition of the meat and the eaters.[1]

"A thing has come to pass which we feel to be right! The machinery of the world, then, is not entirely dislocated: there is harmony, on one point, among the mysterious powers who have to do with us."

Another deeply meditative young man is Algernon Blancove. On the very point of turning over a new leaf, he has the misfortune to lose a wager of a thousand pounds,—which he did not have in the first place.[2]

"A rage of emotions drowned every emotion in his head, and when he got one clear from the mass, it took the form of a bitter sneer at Providence, for cutting off his last chance of reforming his conduct and becoming good. What would he not have accomplished, that was brilliant, and beautiful, and soothing, but for this dead set against him!"

With a gentler touch Clotilde is pictured, on hearing of the disaster to Alvin, as venting the "laugh of the tragic comedian." [3]

"She laughed. The world is upside down—a world without light, or pointing finger, or affection for special favorites, and therefore bereft of all mysterious and attractive wisdom, a crazy world, a corpse of a world—if this be true!"

One more angle has Meredith from which to view this subject, and this shows up the absurdity of the opposite type,—the superior philosopher who disdains to apply the

[1] *Evan Harrington*, 137.

[2] *Rhoda Fleming*, 301. Later, however, an equivalent amount, placed in his hands in trust for another purpose, conveniently paid this debt. "It was enough to make one in love with civilization." *Ibid.*, 326.

[3] *The Tragic Comedians*, 195.

ironic explanation to his own affairs, but prides himself on his detached, Olympian, ironic view of the cosmos. This spirit is incarnate in the wise youth, Adrian Harley.[1]

"He had no intimates except Gibbon and Horace, and the society of these fine aristocrats of literature helped him to accept humanity as it had been, and was; a supreme ironic procession, with laughter of Gods in the background. Why not laughter of mortals also?"

From the tranquillity of this calm eminence he observes the mortal excitement produced by the news of Richard's marriage.[2]

"When one has attained that felicitous point of wisdom from which one sees all mankind to be fools, the diminutive objects may make what new moves they please, one does not marvel at them; their sedateness is as comical as their frolic, and their frenzies more comical still."

Whether or not there is such an actuality as an Ironic Fate, upon whom mortals may blame their failures, or against whom they are doomed to strive in vain, is as speculative a question as any in metaphysics. The ironist is as dogmatic as the theist; and he no doubt gets as much satisfaction from his denial of a rationally ordered universe, as the other does from his assertion of it. To be able to fling back a jest into the face of the Sphinx is undeniably a poor equivalent for guessing her riddle, but it at least helps to take the edge off her inscrutability.

In his *La Satire en France*, Lenient makes irony the opposite of enthusiasm, and emphasizes the fact and the necessity of their perennial alternation, like the recurrence of day and night. It would indeed be a fearful world whose

[1] *Richard Feverel*, 8. [2] *Ibid.*, 322.

passive, indifferent night was succeeded by no bright, clear, active day. But it would also be a wearisome world whose glare never merged into the refreshing season of dusky shadows, quiet half-tones, and twinkling stars. It is well that they are reciprocal and that "*sous ces noms divers reproduèra l'èternelle antethèse qui s'agite au fond de toute sociêtê.*"

PART III

OBJECTS

CHAPTER I

INDIVIDUALS

As the target to the missile, so is its object to satire. A target is in itself a thing of sufficient identity to be amenable to definition,—even if that can be no more precise than "something aimed at." But in the concrete there are targets and targets. So, while the satirized may be reduced to an abstract entity, as deception or some other ubiquitous trait of human nature, there exist in fact as many varieties of the satirized as of satirists. Anything which any one may criticise, if it be subject to humorous treatment, may be a satirical object.

But since subdivisions are convenient, we make three for this purpose, which seem fairly inclusive, though not at all mutually exclusive. The simplest and narrowest class is that of actual Individuals. The next is formed by the cohesion of individuals into groups, creating Institutions. The third is made by the artistic conversion of individuals into fictitious characters, sufficiently artificial to be designated as Types,—more or less complex, according to the nature of their creator, but never entirely simple, if they are fashioned of human stuff.

Even more than usual, however, is the caution necessary that the classification is artificial and the classes inseparable. An individual may, and indeed generally does, represent an idea or an organization or a certain temperament. Particularly when an object of satire, John Doe is not viewed as John Doe but as an embodiment of some principle or kind of conduct disapproved of by his critic.

And conversely, institutions and types, being abstractions, must be made concrete to get them into workable shape. "The position of the satirist," says Lowell, in *The Bigelow Papers*, "is oftentimes one which he would not have chosen, had the election been left to himself. In attacking bad principles, he is obliged to select some individual who has made himself their exponent, and in whom they are impersonate, to the end that what he says may not, through ambiguity, be dissipated *tenues in auras*." Lowell was of course not unaware that the satirist's obligation might be met and fulfilled through the method of dramatic disguise, but it is evident that the author of the *Fable for Critics* had his leanings toward the personal type. Yet he confirms the pious English tradition by adding,—

> "Meanwhile let us not forget that the aim of the true satirist is not to be severe upon persons, but only upon falsehood. * * * Truth is quite beyond the reach of satire. * * * The danger of satire is, that continual use may deaden his sensibility to the force of language."

The real secret is that our primitive impulses clamor for the delectable diet of personalities, and must be appeased by a little judicious indulgence. Under pristine conditions, before we learned to be apologetic for our instincts, we could enjoy our Fescinnine gibings without a qualm. As we grew in poise and culture, we began to feel the need of a finer diet for Cerberus, to gratify his acquired taste. Such a sop was found in the altruistic motive, inexpensive and immediately satisfying.

But, since motives are rarely single, there is frequently in this unconscious pose an admixture of genuine idealism, most often of the patriotic sort. *La Satire Menippée*, for instance, was said to have been worth as much to Henry

of Navarre as was the battle of Ivry; and its real object was the eternal one of good satire. Says a historian,[1]

"All the mean political rivalries which pretend to work only for the public good are exposed there; all those men who take God as a shield to hide their own personal baseness, pass before us."

So also was the *Anti-Jacobin* designed as an instrument for the public weal, though conceived in panic and brought forth in extravagance. Both these productions, moreover, illustrate the difficulty of distinguishing between personal and political or some sort of partisan satire.[2] When Claudius was exposed on his bad eminence by Seneca, Nero, by Persius, Domitian, by Juvenal, Wolsey, by Skelton, Napoleon and George the Third, by Byron, and all four Georges, by Thackeray, it was in every case, not as a mere human Doctor Fell, but as a crafty tyrant or an incompetent mannikin made absurd by an incongruous position of power and authority; although at first the personal interest predominated over the political, the latter increasing with time.

In any case, what has preserved personal satire in literature has been the amber, not the flies. Such satiric portraits as are saved from oblivion,—as those in *Absalom and Achitophel*, *Macflecknoe*, *The Dunciad*, *The Vision of Judgment*,—are spared, not for their subjects but for the wit in which they are dressed, irrespective of the justice or the slander stitched into the costume.

In the field of prose fiction we find a comparatively small amount of direct personal satire, and that modicum attached to the romantic or fantastic section rather than

[1] Van Laun: *History of French Literature*, II, 27.

[2] Cf. also the riot of personalities in Blackwood's, Frazer's, and other periodicals of their time.

the realistic. In the latter the fusion of fact and fancy is too subtle to result in overt portraiture. What Dickens says of Squeers is true in some degree of all fictitious characters. All are drawn from observation, but none remain precisely as observed, after passing through the crucible of their creator's imagination. Of some we chance to know more definitely than of others that they were "taken from life." Disraeli, for instance, in his *Coningsby*, made the Honorable J. W. Croker into the politician Rigby, Lord George Manners into Henry Sidney, and Lord Hertford into the Duke of Monmouth. The last achieved his real immortality as the Marquis of Steyne, and Theodore Hook also had the double honor of being the original of Disraeli's Lucian Gay and Thackeray's Mr. Wagg. Richard Monckton Milnes became the Vavasour of *Tancred*, John Bright, the Mr. Turnbull of *Phineas Redux*, and Gerald Massey played the title rôle in *Felix Holt*. We are aware too that their own families supplied material to Dickens, Brontë, Eliot, and Meredith,[1] but we could hardly class Mr. Micawber, Shirley Keeldar (or her friend Caroline Helstone), Adam Bede, Dinah Morris, or Melchisedek Harrington as examples of personal satire, even when given satirical treatment.

It is natural, therefore, that the member of our group who stands preëminent in the line of individual satire is the one who also heads the list chronologically; that the next are the two Victorian forerunners; and that the only real Victorian left to complete this small tale does it by virtue of his early work. After Thackeray's burlesques, ending about 1850, the personal species becomes practically extinct.

Of Peacock's seven stories, the first three, published during the second decade of the century, are full of thinly

[1] Butler's etchings in *The Way of All Flesh*, are also from personal sources.

veiled contemporary personalities. The next two, in the third decade, have at least the thicker veils of a historical perspective. In *Crochet Castle* (1831) the early symptoms recur, but in much lighter form; and in Peacock's last appearance, thirty years after, they have vanished, though the staging is current and local.

The characters in the first three and the sixth are a sort of stock company, who reappear in the different *dramatis personæ*. Shelley has been identified with Foster of *Headlong Hall*, Scythrop of *Nightmare Abbey*, and Forester of *Melincourt*, though this last might also be Lord Monboddo, as Peacock, like Spenser, had no objection to the economy of duplication. Southey plays the unenviable parts of Nightshade in *Headlong Hall*, Feathernest in *Melincourt*, and Sackbut in *Crochet Castle*. In the last story, however, he may be Mr. Rumblesack Shanstee, since Wordsworth is probably meant in Mr. Wilful Wontsee. The latter is also Mr. Paperstamp in *Melincourt*. Coleridge is another of triple incarnation, appearing as Mystic in *Melincourt*. Flosky in *Nightmare Abbey*, and Skionar in *Crochet Castle*. In this last volume Byron figures as Cypress, and is probably also the Honorable Mr. Listless of *Nightmare Abbey*. Either Gifford or Jeffrey may be intended in Gall, in *Headlong Hall*. In *Melincourt*, Canning is Mr. Anyside Antijack, and Malthus, Mr. Fax.

Of all these the most purely personal, in the sense that they are satires on the men as individuals and not as representatives of a philosophy or an organization, are the hits at Coleridge and Southey.[1] The former is allowed to speak for himself:[2]

[1] Freeman observes, "Peacock abused contemporary poets generally, the Lake School particularly, and Southey in especial, for eighteen years." *Thomas Love Peacock, A Critical Study*, 141.

[2] *Melincourt*, 106.

"'I divide my day,' said Mr. Mystic, '*on a new principle:* I am always poetical at breakfast, moral at luncheon, metaphysical at dinner, and political at tea. Now you shall know my opinion of the hopes of the world. * * *

"Who art thou?—MYSTERY!—I hail thee! Who art thou?—JARGON!—I love thee! Who art thou?—SUPERSTITION!—I worship thee! Hail, transcendental TRIAD!'"

Later while his companions are concerned practically over the catastrophe of an explosion of gas in his room, he bewails it as— [1]

"* * * an infallible omen of evil—a type and symbol of an approaching period of public light—when the smoke of metaphysical mystery, and the vapours of ancient superstition, which he had done all that in him lay to consolidate in the spirit of man, would explode at the touch of analytical reason, leaving nothing but the plain common sense matter-of-fact of moral and political truth—a day that he earnestly hoped he might never live to see."

Mr. Floskey is thus described: [2]

"He had been in his youth an enthusiast for liberty, and had hailed the dawn of the French Revolution as the promise of a day that was to banish war and slavery, and every form of vice and misery, from the face of the earth. Because all this was not done, he deduced that nothing was done, and from this deduction, according to his system of logic, he drew a conclusion that worse than nothing was done, * * * " etc.

And thus he describes his opinion of current literature: [3]

"This rage for novelty is the bane of literature. Except my works and those of my particular friends, nothing is good that

[1] *Melicoourt*, 108.

[2] *Nightmare Abbey*, 23. That this was a typical experience is well known. Cf. Browning's *Lost Leader*.

[3] *Ibid.*, 49.

is not as old as Jeremy Taylor; and, *entre nous*, the best parts of my friends' books were either written or suggested by myself."

In the *Noctes Ambrosianæ*, Coleridge gets a contemporary thrust for his conceit and dogmatism, with the conclusion,—

"The author o' *Christabel*, and *The Auncient Mariner*, had better just continue to see visions, and to dream dreams—for he's no fit for the wakin' world."

The most direct attack on Southey is in the comment on Mr. Feathernest: [1]

"* * * to whom the Marquis had recently given a place in exchange for his conscience. The poet had, in consequence, burned his old 'Odes to Truth and Liberty,' and published a volume of Panegyrical Addresses 'to all the crowned heads in Europe,' with the motto, 'Whatever is at court, is right.'"

In Disraeli's *Ixion*, Enceladus has been identified as Wellington, Hyperion as Sir Robert Peel, Jupiter as George the Third, and Apollo as Byron. Byronism indeed is one of the shining marks loved by the nineteenth century, a fact that not only labels the British temper, but illustrates the irony of time's revenges. The last great satirist of the old school himself becomes the prime object of satire for the new, partly through mutual lack of understanding, and partly because Byron, like some other brilliant wits, lacked a real sense of humor. Both these reasons enabled Lytton to flatter himself that his *Pelham* had "contributed to put an end to the Satanic Mania—to turn the thoughts and ambitions of young gentlemen without neckcloths, and

[1] *Melincourt*, 80. In his Review of Southey's *Colloquies of Society*, Macaulay points out the Laureate's two unique faculties,—"of believing without a reason, and of hating without a provocation."

young clerks who were sallow, from playing the Corsair and boasting that they were villains." [1]

Nearly a half century after *Pelham*, we have a reference which strikes indirectly the keynote of satire, made by a genius great enough to admire judiciously (as he elsewhere testifies) another genius.[2]

"Beauchampism, as one confronting him calls it, may be said to stand for nearly everything which is the obverse of Byronism, and rarely woos your sympathy, shuns the statuesque pathetic, or any kind of posturing."

It was Lytton, in turn, who was attacked by Thackeray. He heads the list of *Novels by Eminent Hands*, and is brought up again in the *Yellowplush Papers* and *Epistles to the Literati*.

But here, as everywhere, the complexity of this type obtrudes itself. Most of the preceding illustrations have been concerned with men as authors, that is to say, with certain products of literature; and this puts them out of the personal class. The same thing is true of Trollope's sarcastic allusions to the novels of Disraeli and Dickens, and Kingsley's little flings at *Coningsby* and Young England generally.

No comment on the whole matter of personal satire could be more to the point or more conclusive than that given informally by Thackeray in a couple of letters concerning his own attack on Lytton,—which he calls by the right name. The first is addressed to Lady Blessington, and accounts for his objection to E. L. B.[3]

[1] Quoted in his biography, by the Earl of Lytton, I, 347.

The Ettrick Shepherd tries to rally Tickler out of his glumness by the argument,—"Everybody kens ye're a man of genius, without your pretending to be melancholy."

[2] *Beauchamp's Career*, 39.

[3] Both are quoted in the *Life* by the Earl of Lytton, I, 548, 549.

"But there are sentiments in his writings which always anger me, big words which make me furious, and a premeditated fine writing against which I can't help rebelling. My antipathy don't go any further than this."

The other is written to Lytton himself, calling his attention to a paragraph in his Preface to the 1856 edition of his (Thackeray's) Works; it is this that really contains the apology:

"There are two performances especially (among the critical and biographical works of the erudite Mr. Yellowplush) which I am very sorry to see reproduced, and I ask pardon of the author of *The Caxtons* for a lampoon which I know he himself has forgiven, and which I wish I could recall. * * * I wonder at the recklessness of the young man who could fancy such satire was harmless jocularity, and never calculate that it might give pain."

This fine utterance, coming at just the right time and from the right person,—the last of the personal satirists, reformed into the author of *Vanity Fair*,—might be used as an appropriate epitaph for individual satire. Since the time when Lamb observed that "Satire does not look pretty upon a tombstone," we have not only agreed with him, but gone enough further to admit that it is no more winsome applied to the living than to the dead. And if we still for the most part reserve our eulogy until it can serve as elegy, we are willing to let the dead past of spiteful, recriminating satire bury its dead.

It would not, as a matter of fact, be quite fair to the past to ignore its own repudiation of this brackish current that has discolored the main satiric stream. For it was undoubtedly this element that Cervantes had in mind when he declared,— [1]

[1] *Journey to Parnassus*, Chapter IV. Gibson's translation.

"My humble pen hath never winged its way
Athwart the field satiric, that low plain
Which leads to foul rewards, and quick decay."

In the bitterly partisan seventeenth century Sir Thomas Browne might well say, "It is seldom that men who care much for the truth write satire." And in the beginning of the next century we find the confession,— [1]

"Our Satire is nothing but Ribaldry and Billingsgate. Scurrility passes for wit; and he who can call names in the greatest variety of phrases, is looked upon to have the shrewdest pen."

A later eighteeth century view is voiced by Cowper: [2]

"Most satirists are indeed a public scourge;
Their mildest physic is a farrier's purge;
Their acrid temper turns, as soon as stirr'd,
The milk of their good purpose all to curd.
Their zeal begotten, as their works rehearse,
By lean despair upon an empty purse,
The wild assassins start into the street,
Prepar'd to poignard whomsoe'er they meet."

It is with reference to this conception, induced by this type of satire, that a modern critic observes, "It is commonly held by the unreflecting that your satirist is bitter, your humorist a jester." [3]

But in the nineteenth century comes a change brought about by two influences: a finer discrimination, which shrinks from passing snap judgments on things in the lump; and a more gracious urbanity, sometimes springing from that humanitarianism which is the Victorian's pride, sometimes masquerading under its guise, sometimes even

[1] *Spectator*, 451, C.
[2] *Charity*, II, 501 ff.
[3] Lionel Johnson, in *Post Liminium*.

in scorn of it, but always characterized by tact and taste, if not by a tender regard for possibly hurt feelings.

Amidst the abundance of indirect testimony to this fact we have two direct ones, from an earlier and a later novelist. Lytton declared in *Pelham* that he "did not wish to be an individual satirist." And George Eliot said in one of her letters,—

> "We may satirize character and qualities in the abstract without injury to our moral nature, but persons hardly ever."

One of her own critics makes an observation on her work which shows the new idea of satire struggling with the old, that all satire must be toothed,—in spite of Bishop Hall. In the *milieu* of Eliot, says Mrs. Oliphant, "the satirist need be no sharper than the humorist, and may almost fulfil his office lovingly." [1]

Whether or not the satirist has any more of an "office" than that of being an artist, he is at least beginning to have love enough for his art, if not for humanity, to do his work as graciously as the nature of it will permit. In Mallock's *New Republic*, for instance, there is a sort of Peacockian revival of personalities. But, while the figures of Carlyle, Arnold, Huxley, Jowett, Pater, Ruskin, Rossetti, and others, are recognizable through their thin disguises, they are not drawn with the caricaturistic strokes that distorted those of Southey, Coleridge, Wordsworth, Shelley and Byron, a generation or so earlier. It is, however, from a member of that earlier generation that we get a vivacious expression of the self-reflexive irony which is for the satirist literally a *saving* sense of humor. In his *Lyric Odes to the Royal Academicians*, Peter Pindar reports a dialogue with

[1] *Victorian Age of Eng. Lit.*, 461.

Satire, who urges him to attack certain of his contemporaries:

> "'Not write!' cried Satire, red as fire with rage:
> 'This instant glorious war with dulness wage;
>
> * * * * * * * *
>
> Flay half the Academic imps alive;
> Smoke, smoke, the Drones of that stupendous Hive.'"

Later, made compunctious by the fable of the frogs pelted to death with stones thrown merely in sport, he resolves to reform, but is dissuaded:

> "'Poh, poh!' cried Satire with a smile,
> 'Where is the *glorious freedom* of our isle,
> If not permitted to call names?'
> Methought the argument had weight:
> 'Satire,' quoth I, 'You're very right;'
> So once more forth volcanic Peter flames."

"Life," says Hawthorne, "is a mixture of marble and mud." In this particular fragment of life as represented in literature, we have the two in paradoxical combination. Personal satire has the effect sometimes of being an ugly little gargoyle made of marble, and sometimes, of a harmonius form done in muddy clay. The ideal union of matter and manner,—an Apollo in marble,—is not for such an impish sculptor as satire. Only to the true artist, poetry, is allotted the task of shaping beauty into rounded perfection.

CHAPTER II

INSTITUTIONS

Since institutions are satirized by those who take an interest in public affairs, without being too well satisfied with the way they are managed, we may expect to find them conspicuously under indictment at this time. The Victorians were notably a public-spirited group, and left no cranny unpenetrated by their critical searchlight; for it was the lamp they used, and not the hammer. The two most striking features of nineteenth century public satire are its ubiquity and its moderation. In all departments it was zealous for reform; in none did it see the need of sweeping abolishment. It emanated from a generation poised waveringly between acquiescence and iconoclasm, but avoiding both extremes. Awake to the blindness and blundering of the past, it was still too rooted in piety and tradition to visualize a future radically different. Strong remedies, falling short of the drastic and destructive, seemed about the right prescription. Dudley Sowerby is Victorianism incarnate: [1]

"* * * he had been educated in his family to believe, that the laws governing human institutions are divine—until History has altered them. They are altered, to present a fresh bulwark against the infidel."

The Victorians deplored, for instance, the domestic disaster that inevitably follows the mercenary marriage encouraged by Society, but they no more questioned the

[1] *One of Our Conquerors*, 267.

marriage ceremony than they would any law of nature. *Getting Married* does not merely happen to be post-Victorian; it could not have been otherwise.

They were also intensely partisan both as to Church and State, according to the immemorial human habit; but none of them, not even Disraeli or George Eliot, would refuse an amen to the invocation of Charlotte Brontë: [1]

"Britain would miss her church, if that church fell. God save it! God also reform it!"

Their Constitutional Monarchy was a broken reed, worse than useless, yet *Anarchy* was a fearful word, second only to *Atheism* in horrific import. As to the prevailing system of education, it was derided as a failure and set down as naught; but we hear of no youth abjuring college because it wasted his time and money.

Beyond these negative statements, however, the Victorians cannot be described *en masse*, for individuality comes into play, both in emphasis of interest and manner of attack. Nor is there throughout the strictly Victorian period, any discernible evolution of ideas. From Peacock to Kingsley the various novelists are to be distinguished only by local color and personality. But the two whose lives actually extend into the twentieth century are separated sharply in this matter from their predecessors, and serve as links between their time and ours. This omits only George Eliot, who belongs to the second group, although she uses her modern scientific data seriously and not satirically. With Meredith and Butler she forms a trio which faces resolutely with the Course of Empire, while the others are more or less half-heartedly saying their prayers toward the Orient.

[1] *Shirley*, I, 330.

As to the institutions themselves, started early in the human stage through gregariousness and mutual dependence, and gradually increased until now it is no longer possible for two or three to meet together without organizing and equipping themselves with officers and constitutions, any sort of classification must be as tentative, interpenetrating, and unsatisfactory as are most topical outlines. But a possible listing of satirized groups or provinces may be made under half a dozen headings: Society, State, Church, School, Art, and Ideals.

By Society is meant that powerful but intangible influence that has a name but no local habitation. It is in effect a federation of homes, organized on the caste system. Known as "fashionable," or "polite," its chief concern is with the lighter side of man's life; with his recreation if a worker, or his amusement if a drone. In view of the fact that it is particularly the feminine domain, with the corollary that Woman's Place is in the Home, She, as a satirized class, belongs here as appropriately as anywhere.

The State includes such ramifications as politics, law, charities and corrections, labor and capital, and warfare. It is in this connection that satire may be defined, as by Myers, as "essentially a weapon of the weak against the strong, of a minority against a majority;" and by Besant in the same terms, the latter adding, "Satire began when man began to be oppressed." This statement occurs in his *French Humourists*, and it is interesting to note the confirmation implied in Lenient's description of France suffering under oppression: "*Esclave, elle tremble et obéit, mais se venge par la satire de ceux qui lui font peur.*"

The Church, when allied with the State, assumed dominion not only over it but over the Home as well. This last, indeed, was raised to the high estate of an Institution

by the joint ministrations of the other two. By imposing Marriage upon it, they were enabled to lead it, often more firmly than gently, between them; State grasping the right hand of Home to insure legalization, and Church the left, to produce sanctification.

More recently Church and School have exchanged places in relation to State, as education has become a public concern, and religion a private. Art and Ideals, like Society, are not palpably crystallized, but are useful designations. The main subject criticised in Art is that branch to which the critics themselves belong, Literature. When Ideals or Ideas are ridiculed, it is naturally as fallacious reasoning or erroneous judgment. Attacks on civilization in general and the English species of it in particular, may also be put here for want of a better place.

According to the satirists, Society is at fault chiefly for its worship of Mammon, its hollowness, and snobbish vanity. These lead to artificial relationships, the most disastrous of which is the marriage of convenience, which usurps the higher dominion of sentiment and romance.

Peacock is interested not only in this matrimonial bargaining but in the accompanying insistence on a decent disguise. Mr. Sarcastic is pointing out the astonishing results to be secured by a practice of absolute frankness in speech. Among other instances, he cites the shock he gave Miss Pennylove by declaring to her,— [1]

"When my daughter becomes of marriageable age, I shall commission Christie to put her up to auction, the highest bidder to be the buyer, * * * "

In spite of the lady's utter amazement and indignation, she afterwards rejects manhood and love in favor of senility and wealth; whereby her critic concludes,—

[1] *Melincourt*, 10.

"How the dignity and delicacy of such a person could have been affected, if the preliminary negotiation with her hobbling Strephon had been conducted through the instrumentality of honest Christie's hammer, I cannot possibly imagine."

This is evidently not to be construed into a satire against women, for Peacock follows the lead of Defoe in the chivalrous justice which, so far from ridiculing women, pointed out on the contrary the absurdity of the conditions that had made them seem absurd. In the same story he describes Sir Henry as— [1]

"* * * one of those who maintained the heretical notion that women are, or at least may be, rational beings; though, from the great pains usually taken in what is called education to make them otherwise, there are unfortunately very few examples to warrant the truth of the theory."

In another connection he observes that the repression of feminine activity shows— [2]

"* * * the usual logic of tyranny, which first places its extinguisher on the flame, and then argues that it cannot burn."

As to the mercenary marriage, further satire is contributed by Thackeray, whose plaints over the matches made every day in Vanity Fair are well known; by Dickens and Brontë in short, glancing shafts; and by Trollope, who makes it the main or secondary theme of half a dozen novels. On the more intricate subject of the Eternal Feminine, the contributions come from Lytton, Brontë, (not, however, from Mrs. Gaskell or George Eliot), Trollope, and Meredith. The first three agree on the bane of enforced idleness, which breeds frivolity and inane restlessness.

[1] *Melincourt*, 17. [2] *Ibid.*, 150.

Caroline Helstone reflects bitterly on the helplessness of her position: [1]

"I observe that to such grievances as society cannot readily cure, it usually forbids utterance, on pain of its scorn: this scorn being only a sort of tinselled cloak to its deformed weakness. People hate to be reminded of ills they are unwilling or unable to remedy: such reminder, in forcing on them a sense of their own incapacity, or a more painful sense of an obligation to make some unpleasant effort, troubles their ease and shakes their self-complacency. Old maids, like the homeless and unemployed poor, should not ask for a place and an occupation in the world: the demand disturbs the happy and rich: it disturbs parents."

She envies Solomon's model woman, who had to arise early to go about her own business; and Violet Effingham exclaims,— [2]

"'I wish I could be something, if it were only a stick in waiting, or a door-keeper. It is so good to be something!'

"'A man should try to be something,' said Phineas.

"'And a woman must be content to be nothing,—unless Mr. Mill can pull us through!'"

By the late seventies, Mr. Mill, with reinforcements, had done something toward pulling us through; so that Meredith was able to satirize masculine desire to stave off the threatened feminism, and failure to appreciate the value of equality in comradeship.

In his ideal for his first betrothed, Constantia Durham, Sir Willoughby is as much Man as Egoist: [3]

[1] *Shirley*, II, 71. Trollope speaks through Laura Kennedy and Madame Max Goesler, in *Phineas Finn*, the former of whom longs vainly to go out and milk the cows, while the latter complains of having only vicarious interests.

[2] *Phineas Finn*, III, 103. After finally accepting Lord Chiltern, she almost gives him up because she cannot stand his idleness.

[3] *The Egoist*, 21.

"He wished for her to have come to him out of an egg shell, somewhat more astonished at things than a chicken, but as completely enclosed before he tapped the shell, and seeing him with her sex's eyes first of all men."

In another of the late novels, the two abstractions, society and woman, are fused in one description as,— [1]

"* * * the terrible aggregate social woman, of man's creation, hated by him, dreaded, scorned, satirized, and nevertheless, upheld, esteemed, applauded: a mark of civilization, on to which our human society must hold as long as we have nothing humaner. She exhibits virtue, with face of waxen angel, with paw of desert beast, and blood of victims on it."

This is discrimination; the general dearth of which is lamented by Lady Dunstane: [2]

"The English notion of women seems to be that we are born white sheep or black; circumstances have nothing to do with our colour. They dread to grant distinctions, and to judge of us discerningly is beyond them."

And Lætitia, after listening to a long Patterne discourse on feminine traits and limitations, laconically sums up the whole matter in a compact epigram: [3]

"'The generic woman appears to have an extraordinary faculty for swallowing the individual.'"

After this, decidedly flat and puerile falls the witticism of Kingsley, spoken by Bracebridge in reply to Lancelot's

[1] *Lord Ormont and his Aminta*, 182.

[2] *Diana of the Crossways*, 158.

[3] *The Egoist*, 163. Cf. Simeon Strunsky's essay on *The Eternal Feminine*, in *The Patient Observer;* a humorous sermon which might have been developed from this logical text.

impatient question why women would "make such fools of themselves with clergymen": [1]

"They are quite right. They always like the strong men—the fighters and the workers. In Voltaire's time they all ran after the philosophers. In the middle ages, books tell us, they worshipped the knights errant. They are always on the winning side, the cunning little beauties. In the war-time, when the soldiers had to play the world's game, the ladies all caught the red-coat fever; now, in these talking and thinking days (and be hanged to them for bores), they have the black-coat fever for the same reason."

Thackeray also is guilty of the generalization not at his time discovered to be fallacious: [2]

"Women won't see matters-of-fact in a matter-of-fact point of view, and justice, unless it is tinged with a little romance, gets no respect from them."

The generosity of "Little Sister" in condoning young Firmin's unwise passiveness is based on "that admirable injustice which belongs to all good women, and for which let us be daily thankful." At this point the undevout votary burns considerable medieval incense at the feminine shrine,—not caring much if a little smoke should blow into his idols' eyes: [3]

[1] *Yeast*, 110. Elsewhere in the volume the author expounds his feministic philosophy: "She tried, as women will, to answer him with arguments, and failed, as women will fail." 29. "Woman will have guidance. It is her delight and glory to be led." 177.

[2] *The Adventures of Philip*, II, 42.

[3] *Ibid.*, I, 237. Thackeray's patronizing smugness and antique attitude towards women come out with a beautiful unconsciousness in a letter to one of them, and that one a prime favorite with him, Mrs. Brookfield: "I am afraid I don't respect your sex enough, though. Yes I do, when they are occupied with loving and sentiment rather than with other business of life." His fair correspondent could not retort that he would have found a congenial soul in

"I know, dear ladies, that you are angry at this statement. But, even at the risk of displeasing *you*, we must tell the truth. You would wish to represent yourselves as equitable, logical, and strictly just. * * * Women equitable, logical, and strictly just! Mercy upon us! If they were, population would cease, the world would be a howling wilderness."

The apologist errs, however, in supposing that any ladies, —real or fictitious, his own characters or others',— are angry at his accusation of injustice. Helen Pendennis, Amelia Sedley, even Ethel Newcome and Lady Castlewood, would be flattered; Becky Sharp and Beatrix Esmond would not care. And as for Caroline Helstone, Violet Effingham, Diana Warwick, Sandra Belloni, they are too far away to be disturbed by either smoke or aroma.

For half our novelists, the woman question as such did not exist, and about the same number show little or no interest in the world of fashion, though the two lists coincide only in part. Lytton, Thackeray, Trollope, Meredith, and in a small way, Kingsley, have grudges against society in addition to its treatment of women and women's influence on it; while Disraeli, Dickens, and Butler have some general gibes at social follies.

From first to last in his near-half-century of writing, Lytton, himself to the manner born, loved to prick the social bubble. In youth he says: [1]

"The English of the fashionable world make business an enjoyment, and enjoyment a business: they are born without a smile; they rove about public places like so many easterly winds —cold, sharp, and cutting; * * * while they have neg-

Meredith's Lady Wathin, who "both dreaded and detested brains in women, believing them to be devilish;" but she might have reminded him of the twinkling chivalry of Christopher North, who confessed, "To my aged eyes a neat ankle is set off attractively by a slight shade of cerulian."

[1] *Pelham*, 291.

lected all the graces and charities of artifice, they have adopted all its falsehood and deceit."

Mr. Howard de Howard, rebuking a drawing room smart set, speaks for himself and his class: [1]

"Gentlemen, I have sate by in silence and heard my king derided, and my God blasphemed; but now when you attack the aristocracy, I can no longer refrain from noticing so obviously intentional an insult. *You have become personal.*"

When young Chillingly absconds for a taste of real life, he leaves a letter for his father in which he promises a safe return, and adds,— [2]

"I will then take my place in polite society, call upon you to pay all expenses, and fib on my own account to any extent required by that world of fiction which is peopled by illusions and governed by shams."

In his first adventure, masquerading as a yeoman, he is quizzed by Uncle Bovill on topics for the intelligent,— politics, agriculture, finance. To maintain his incognito, he affects ignorance; and is astonished at the triumphant deduction,— [3]

"Just as I thought, sir; you know nothing of these matters— you are a gentleman born and bred—your clothes can't disguise you, sir."

Disraeli, whose career paralleled Lytton's in several ways, takes the same tone toward his own social environment, but his deeper political earnestness led him to criticise that environment in the wider as well as narrower social sense. In his first real novel we find the latter by itself, in such touches as this: [4]

[1] *Pelham*, 73.
[2] *Kenelm Chillingly*, 42.
[3] *Ibid.*, 81.
[4] *The Young Duke*, 6.

"Always in the best set, never flirting with the wrong man, and never speaking to the wrong woman, all agreed that the Ladies Saint Maurice had fairly won their coronets."

Again it appears in this account of the hero: [1]

"The banquet was over: the Duke of Saint James passed his examination with unqualified approval; and having been stamped at the Mint of Fashion as a sovereign of the brightest die, he was flung forth, like the rest of his golden brethren, to corrupt the society of which he was the brightest ornament."

The house party of the Dacres, a family of taste and high standards, is described negatively: [2]

"* * * no duke who is a gourmand, no earl who is a jockey, no manœuvering mother, no flirting daughters, no gambling sons, for your entertainment, * * * As for buffoons and artists, to amuse a vacant hour or sketch a vacant face, we must frankly tell you at once that there is not one."

But from *Popanilla* through the Trilogy the inanity and pretense of this social circle is made more pointed by contrast with those socially beneath it. Egremont's experience with the plain people induces this serious indictment of his own set: [3]

"It is not merely that it is deficient in warmth and depth and breadth; that it is always discussing persons instead of principles, * * * it is not merely that it has neither imagination, nor fancy, nor sentiment, nor feeling, nor knowledge, to recommend it, but * * * it is in short, trivial, uninteresting, stupid, really vulgar."

Thackeray also speaks from within, and has to his credit his great roster of Snobs, his panoramic Vanity Fair,

[1] *The Young Duke*, 16. [2] *Ibid.*, 86. [3] *Sybil*, 153.

and his imposing procession of worldly, heartless, noble old dames. Trollope prefers country life, but his Claverings, de Courcys, Luftons, and the Duke of Omnium, show that he has no desire to neglect its aristocracy. Dickens, on the other hand, loved London and its struggling poor, but in the Merdles, the Veneerings, and the Dorrits *redivivi*, he does what he can with the humors of the struggling rich.

To Meredith the exasperating thing about polite society was its impoliteness,—its delight in gossip and scandal, its petty but venomous persecutions, and the false courtesy that takes refuge in conventionality. This impression apparently deepened with time, for it is glimpsed only in *Evan Harrington* and *Sandra Belloni*, of the earlier books, but is entirely absent from none of the last half dozen.

Butler, preoccupied with other subjects, takes time for only one good shot at this, but that one is so good that it forms a fitting climax. He mentions casually an Erewhonian custom, which may be taken as symbolic of that country's social behavior and philosophy: [1]

"When any one dies, the friends of the family * * * send little boxes filled with artificial tears, and with the name of the sender painted neatly upon the outside of the lid. The tears vary in number from two to fifteen or sixteen, according to the degree of intimacy or relationship; and people sometimes find it a nice point of etiquette to know the exact number which they ought to send. Strange as it may appear, this attention is highly valued, and its omission by those from whom it might be expected is keenly felt. These tears were formerly stuck with adhesive plaster to the cheeks of the bereaved, and were worn in public for a few months after the death of a relative; they were then banished to the hat or bonnet, and are now no longer worn."

[1] *Erewhon*, 136.

Whether the last clause may be viewed as a hopeful augury for the future, the author does not state.

The step from the society of the drawing room to society at large, or mankind, is a refreshing passage from indoors, where everything is artificial, even the tears of bereavement, to the fresh air of common interest. The weather may not always be serene nor the atmosphere invigorating, but at least there is a wide horizon and a perspective of some scope. It is evident that the Victorians enjoyed these excursions into the masculine domain of Government, for not one of the list forbade his mind to roam into its boundaries, and not one is wholly silent as to the impressions gained by this adventuring. Here the resemblance ends. Interest in public problems and The People varies from a minimum in Thackeray and George Eliot to a maximum in Peacock, Disraeli, and Butler. There is also great diversity in both breadth and intensity. Lytton, Dickens, Trollope, have several irons in the fire. Gaskell, Brontë, Reade, Kingsley, have but one or two, but the heat is none the less fervent. In some cases, indeed, it is too fervent to give off the sparkle of ridicule, and thus falls without our province. And in some cases, while it is meant seriously as propaganda, it cannot be taken seriously as literature; for the artist is not expected to speak with the tongue of statesmen and economists, and conversely, as Dowden reminds us, "a political manifesto in three volumes is not a work of art." [1]

[1] Concluding his contrast between *Alton Locke* and Disraeli's Trilogy, in *Transcripts and Studies*, 193. In this connection another contrast, between Disraeli and Mrs. Ward, is interesting, because it turns on the effect of humor. "Her presentment of the lighter side of English political life is accurate, and in its way interesting and historically valuable, but it is wholly wanting in that brilliant satiric touch which has made Disraeli's novels live as literature when their political significance has utterly passed away." Traill, in *The New Fiction*, 44.

Neither of these strictures applies to Peacock, who launches the subject for us in a pungent description of the good old days of Celtic antiquity: [1]

"Political science they had none. * * * Still they went to work politically much as we do. The powerful took all they could get from their subjects and neighbors; and called something or other sacred and glorious when they wanted the people to fight for them. They repressed disaffection by force, when it showed itself in an overt act; but they encouraged freedom of speech, when it was, like Hamlet's reading, 'words, words, words.'"

In the same story, the episode of the decaying embankment, with its parody of Lord Canning's Defense of the British Constitution, and the satire on the game laws, set the pace for the subsequent thrusts at Toryism and the country squires, particularly Meredith's, whom he naturally influenced. Demagogic bamboozlement of the public is punctured again in the speech of Mr. Paperstamp: [2]

"We shall make out a very good case; but you must not forget to call the present public distress an awful dispensation; a little pious cant goes a great way towards turning the thoughts of men from the dangerous and Jacobinical propensity of looking into moral and political causes for moral and political effects."

It is in *Melincourt* also that the campaign of Mr. Oran Hautton in the Borough of Onevote starts the satiric ball rolling into election camps,—later pushed along by the authors of *Pelham*, *The Newcomes*, *Doctor Thorne*, *Felix Holt*, *Middlemarch*, and *Beauchamp's Career*.

Although Lytton started out as a Liberal, he ended as a Conservative, and furnishes some counter satire against

[1] *The Misfortunes of Elphin*, 63. [2] *Melincourt*, 165.

democracy. In *Night and Morning* he speaks of men losing their democratic enthusiasm; and in *The Coming Race* he gives proof that his is entirely lost. The family of the narrator are Americans, "rich and aristocratic, therefore disqualified for public service;" his father, defeated by his tailor in the race for Congress, decides on the superior beauty of private life. The Vrilya have a very expressive compound word. *Koom* means a profound hollow; *Posh* is a term of utter contempt; "*Koom-Posh* is their name for the government of the many, or the ascendency of the most ignorant and hollow." [1] This contempt, distributed impartially over dishonest demagogue and gullible public, is nothing new. Smollett, for instance, in his *Adventures of an Atom*, appreciates the art of oratory:

"Our orator was well acquainted with all the legerdemain of his own language, as well as with the nature of the beast he had to rule. He knew when to distract its weak brain with a tumult of incongruous and contradictory ideas: he knew when to overwhelm its feeble faculty of thinking, by pouring in a torrent of words without any ideas annexed."

The same Adventurer notes that the names of the two political parties of Japan signify respectively More Fool than Knave, and More Knave than Fool. It is, of course this aspect of democracy that leads Lowell to picture it as "Helpless as spilled beans on a dresser."

Statemanship was Disraeli's whole existence, and his art a handmaiden to politics. More than any other nineteenth century novelist he complemented destructive criticism by a definite constructive policy. To a contemporary critic, a reforming Tory was a white blackbird; but our own generation, having witnessed the phenomenon

[1] *The Coming Race*, 81.

of Progressive Republicanism, has less difficulty in understanding the paradox. It was not indifference to the welfare of the masses that induced Disraeli's belief in the rule of a selected class, but a distrust of popular ability and judgment, and a conviction (acknowledged in our own time as a truth and the real salvation of democracy) that efficiency can come only from expert knowledge and training. From such a viewpoint satire would naturally be directed not against the people but against its incapable and dishonest leadership. Peacock's scorn of this exploitation of popular ignorance and helplessness is taken up by both his nearest successors, expressed, as it happens, in a pair of portraits of the ward-politician type.

Pelham repudiates Vincent's proposed new party because of its bad personnel, men— [1]

"* * * who talk much, who perform nothing—who join ignorance of every principle of legislation to indifference for every benefit to the people:—who are full of 'wise saws', but empty of 'modern instances'—who level upwards, and trample downwards—and would only value the ability you are pleased to impute to me, in the exact proportion that a sportsman values the ferret, that burrows for his pleasure, and destroys for his interest."

Montacute draws a more concrete and ironic picture: [2]

"Find a man who, totally destitute of genius, possesses nevertheless considerable talent; who has official aptitude, a volubility of routine rhetoric, great perseverance, a love of af-

[1] *Pelham*, 210.

[2] *Tancred*, 73. Cf. the king's speech to Popanilla; also Gerard's observation,—"'I have no doubt you will get through the business very well, Mr. Hoaxem, particularly if you be "frank and explicit"; that is the right line to take when you wish to conceal your own mind and to confuse the minds of others.'" *Sybil*, 403.

fairs, who, embarrassed neither by the principles of the philosopher nor by the prejudices of the bigot, can assume, with a cautious facility, the prevalent tone, and disembarrass himself of it, with a dexterous ambiguity, the moment it ceases to be predominant: recommending himself to the innovator by his approbation of change 'in the abstract,' and to the conservative by his prudential and practical respect for that which is established; such a man, though he be one of an essentially small mind, though his intellectual qualities be less than moderate, with feeble powers of thought, no imagination, contracted sympathies, and a most loose public morality; such a man is the individual whom kings and parliaments would select to govern the State or rule the Church."

It is not to be supposed, however, that the people would choose any better than kings and parliaments; on the contrary,— [1]

"The Thirty at Athens were at least tyrants. They were marked men. But the obscure majority, who, under our present constitution, are destined to govern England, are as secret as a Venetian conclave. Yet on their dark voices all depends."

The trend of the succeeding novelists is toward a modified liberalism, but Meredith is the only one to satirize the reactionary attitude as such. The others throw the emphasis elsewhere. Besides, even such humanitarians as Dickens, Gaskell, Reade, and Kingsley, are dubious as to the remedial power of popular government, and seem inclined toward Carlyle's view of Chartism. What Chesterton says of one of them would not be untrue applied to the rest: [2]

[1] *Sybil*, 43.

[2] In his *Dickens*, 81. Dickens himself admits in a letter to Macready (1855) that he has "no present political faith or hope—not a grain."

"All his grumblings through this book of *American Notes*, all his shrieking satire in *Martin Chuzzlewit*, are expressions of a grave and reasonable fear he had touching the future of democracy."

But the humanitarianism itself is sounded in a harmonious chord, whose overtone is a ridicule, more grim than gay, of the delinquents;—those who lack the spirit of humanity, yet are the very ones, on the principle of *noblesse oblige*, in whom it should well up most abundantly. If they fail through that ignorance and mental limitation from which not even the aristocracy are always exempt, the blow is tempered accordingly; but it falls more heavily when the roots of the evil are the black ones of selfishness and perversity.

Lady Lufton, for instance, is a kind soul, who would have made an excellent Providence, though scarcely adequate to cope with the mismanagement of the Providence already installed over human affairs: [1]

"She liked cheerful, quiet, well-to-do people, who loved their Church, their country, and their Queen, and who were not too anxious to make a noise in the world. She desired that all the farmers round her should be able to pay their rents without trouble, that all the old women should have warm flannel petticoats, that the workingmen should be saved from rheumatism by healthy food and dry houses, that they should all be obedient to their pastors and masters—temporal as well as spiritual. That was her idea of loving her country. She desired also that the copses should be full of pheasants, the stubble-field of partridges, and the gorse covers of foxes; in that way, also, she loved her country."

These are as amiable sentiments for a lady as Victor Radnor's for a gentleman. He is introduced as regretting

[1] *Framley Parsonage*, 14.

his fall on London Bridge chiefly because it led to an unpleasant altercation with a member of the mob.[1]

"* * * he found that enormous beast comprehensible only when it applauded him; and besides, he wished it warmly well; all that was good for it; plentiful dinners, country excursions, stout menagerie bars, music, a dance, and to bed; he was for patting, stroking, petting the mob, for tossing it sops, never for irritating it to show an eye-tooth, much less for causing it to exhibit the grinders."

Everard Romfrey, of sterner stuff, sees the advantage of tempering mercy with justice:[2]

"To his mind the game-laws were the corner-stone of Law, and of a man's right to hold his own; and so delicately did he think the country poised, that an attack on them threatened the structure of justice. The three conjoined Estates were therefore his head gamekeepers; their duty was to back him against the poacher, if they would not see the country tumble. * * * No tenants were forced to take his farms. He dragged no one by the collar. He gave them liberty to go to Australia, Canada, the Americas, if they liked. * * * Still there were grumbling tenants. He swarmed with game, and though he was liberal, his hares and his birds were immensely destructive: computation could not fix the damage done by them. Probably the farmers expected them not to eat. 'There are two parties to a bargain,' said Everard, 'and one gets the worst of it. But if he was never obliged to make it, where's his right to complain?' Men of sense rarely obtain satisfactory answers; they are provoked to despise their kind."

He returns to the argument, deepened in unavoidable pessimism:[3]

[1] *One of Our Conquerors*, 3. [2] *Beauchamp's Career*, 19. [3] *Ibid.*, 28.

"This behavior of corn-law agitators and protectors of poachers was an hypocrisy too horrible for comment. Everard sipped claret."

The novels which depict the really acute phases of labor and poverty,—*Sybil*, *Mary Barton*, *North and South*, *Shirley*, *Alton Locke*, *Hard Times*, (diagnosed by Macaulay as "sullen socialism"), *Put Yourself in his Place*, *Felix Holt*,—are apt to have John Barton's kind of laugh, if any, "a low chuckle, that had no mirth in it." But the author of the first of these puts into another story a pungent little description: [1]

"The Elysians consisted of a few thousand beautified mortals, the only occupation of whose existence was enjoyment; the rest of the population comprised some millions of Gnomes and Sylphs, who did nothing but work, and ensured by their labour the felicity of the superior class."

It is inevitable that the artist and the humorist should find their most congenial fields in those relationships that are vital, and not too hampered by the technique of more formal and crystallized institutions. Prisons, Asylums, Courts, and the whole legal machinery, offer a less inviting prospect than do political parties and theories, and the contrast between social strata.

Yet the first third of our list,—Peacock, Lytton, Disraeli, and Dickens,—with the addition of Reade, Trollope, and Butler, did not shrink from contact with red tape. Dickens and Reade have the monopoly of the department of Charities and Corrections, though Lytton asserted the purpose of *Paul Clifford* to be an indictment against so-

[1] *The Infernal Marriage*, 353. In *The Young Duke* there is an allusion to "the two thousand Brahmins who constitute the World," and to "the ten or twelve or fifteen millions of Pariahs for whose existence philosophers have hitherto failed to adduce a satisfactory cause." 132.

ciety's manufacture and destruction of criminals; and of *Night and Morning* to show the injustice and fallacy of its treatment respectively of vice and crime. In regard to the latter he says, in the Preface:

"Let a child steal an apple in sport, let a starvling steal a roll in despair, and Law conducts them to the Prison, for evil communications to mellow them for the gibbet. But let a man spend one apprenticeship from youth to old age in vice—let him devote a fortune, perhaps colossal, to the wholesale demoralization of his kind—and he may be surrounded with the adulation of the so-called virtuous, and be served upon its knee by that Lackey—the Modern World!"

Dickens starts his account with the English prison in *Pickwick*, and closes it in *Little Dorrit*. But it is in *David Copperfield* that he stops to point out the whole thing as a stupid error. On the occasion of a visit to the "immense and solid building, erected at a great expense," he reflects,— [1]

"I could not help thinking as we approached the gate, what an uproar would have been made in the country, if any deluded man had proposed to spend one half the money it had cost, on the erection of an industrial school for the young, or a home of refuge for the deserving old."

Within, he finds the rêgime of solitary, unemployed confinement, and the official bait for professions of penitence, fine breeders of hypocrisy, six years before Reade makes the same point in *Never too Late to Mend*. But he sees in the exhibitions of No. 27 and No. 28—the Prize Show, the Crowning Glory—Lattimer, and Uriah Heep, an opportunity for his riotious caricature; while to Reade this de-

[1] P. 430. "Yet no entering wedge of criticism was possible, in so impervious an object. Nobody appeared to have the least idea that there was any other system, but *the* system, to be considered."

generation of character is a wholly serious matter. Indeed, Reade waxes so wroth over the cruelty, mental and physical, practiced upon the hopeless victims that the satire itself is as scorching as Swift's, though of course of less clear a flame.

Yet the warden Hawes, chief culprit through main responsibility, is analyzed as after all irresponsible, on psychological and social grounds: [1]

"Barren of mental resources, too stupid to see, far less read, the vast romance that lay all around him, every cell a volume; too mindless to comprehend his own grand situation on a salient of the State and of human nature, and to discern the sacred and endless pleasures to be gathered there, this unhappy dolt, flung into a lofty situation by shallow blockheads, who, like himself, saw in a jail nothing greater or more than a 'place of punishment,' must still like his prisoners and the rest of us have some excitement to keep him from going dead. * * * Growth is the nature * * * even of an unnatural habit. * * * Torture had grown upon stupid, earnest Hawes; it seasoned that white of egg, a mindless existence."

The satisfaction one has in seeing him finally routed and dismissed is enhanced by the manner of his exit. He is given permission to collect his belongings before departure:— [2]

"'I have nothing to take out of the jail, man,' replied Hawes rudely, 'except'—and here he did a bit of pathos and dignity—'my zeal for Her Majesty's service, and my integrity.'

"'Ah,' replied Mr. Lacy, quietly, 'You won't want any help to carry them.'"

Next in order comes the "Visiting Injustice," a purblind creature, who sees only what the warden points out

[1] *Never Too Late to Mend*, 286. [2] *Ibid.*, 415.

to him, and comforts a tortured prisoner with pious exhortations to be patient and submit: [1]

"Item. An occasion for twaddling had come, and this good soul seized it, and twaddled into a man's ear who was fainting on the rack."

Later a sarcastic contrast is drawn between the dinner the official enjoys at home and the convict's gruel he had just ordered diluted.[2]

The first chaplain, well meaning and gentle, is also a failure, through simple inanity: [3]

"Yet Mr. Jones was not a hypocrite nor a monster; he was only a commonplace man—a thing moulded by circumstances instead of moulding them. * * * But at the head of a struggling nation, or in the command of an army in time of war, or at the head of the religious department of a jail, fighting against human wolves, tigers, and foxes, to be commonplace is an iniquity and leads to crime."

On the enlightened officialdom that permits all this, Reade is one with Dickens. When an urgent appeal for investigation is sent to headquarters, the reply is returned that the inspector would reach that place in his normal circuit in six weeks: [4]

"'Six weeks is not long to wait for help in a matter of life and death,' thought the eighty-pounders, the clerks who execute England."

Most unpardonable of all are such cases as Carter,— [5]

[1] *Never Too Late to Mend*, 360.

[2] This foreshadows a similar scene in Frank Norris's *Octopus*.

[3] *Ibid.*, 182.

[4] *Ibid.*, 345.

[5] *Ibid.*, 229. The antipodal point of view in *Latter Day Pamphlets* illustrates vividly the availability of satire for either side of a cause.

"* * * half-witted, half-responsible creatures, missent to jail by shallow judges contentedly executing those shallow laws they ought to modify and stigmatise until civilization shall come and correct them."

The Bench and Bar are tempting game for those who enjoy the absurdity of legal tricks and manners. Disraeli pursues it in the Camelopard Court, in *Popanilla;* Dickens in *Pickwick, Old Curiosity Shop, Bleak House, Our Mutual Friend,* not to mention the Circumlocution and Prerogative Offices; Trollope in *Orley Farm;* and Butler in *Erewhon.*

Furnival, attorney for the defence, makes an eloquent and persuasive appeal in behalf of Lady Mason: [1]

"And yet as he sat down he knew that she had been guilty! * * * and knowing that, he had been able to speak as though her innocence were a thing of course. That those witnesses had spoken truth he also knew, and yet he had been able to hold them up to the execration of all around them as though they had committed the worst of crimes from the foulest of motives! And more than this, stranger than this, worse than this,—when the legal world knew—as the legal world soon did know—that all this had been so, the legal world found no fault with Mr. Furnival, conceiving that he had done his duty by his client in a manner becoming an English barrister and an English gentleman."

Contempt for chicanery and injustice, scorn for downright oppression and exploitation, are notes often sounded. Much more rare is an expression of sympathy for aspiring but baffled mediocrity, with its converse satire for those at fault. The most striking example is given by Trollope. An introductory chapter, with a title and a refrain of *Væ Victis!* is devoted to this subject: [2]

[1] *Orley Farm,* III, 237.

[2] *The Bertrams,* 5.

"There is sympathy for the hungry man, but there is no sympathy for the unsuccessful man who is not hungry. If a fellow-mortal be ragged, humanity will subscribe to mend his clothes; but humanity will subscribe nothing to mend his ragged hopes so long as his outside coat shall be whole and decent."

This indictment is hung on the peg of the competitive examination, a device satirized also by Peacock and Dickens, for being a pretentious failure. Trollope concludes a sarcastic exhortation to all to persevere in the mad scramble for capricious rewards, with this reflection: [1]

"There is something very painful in these races which we English are always running to one who has tenderness enough to think of the nine beaten horses instead of the one who has conquered."

When the tale of twentieth century satire shall be told, considerable space will have to be devoted to Militarism versus Pacifism. But the Victorians lived, if not in piping times of peace, at least in a time reasonably peaceful, for their island heard little but echoes of the European cannon; a condition which tended to keep men's minds at home and occupied with internal affairs. The satirists therefore have little to say about war. Peacock unveils the policy of launching a foreign war in order to smother discontent over domestic troubles. In such stories as *Shirley*, *Silas Marner*, and others located in or soon after the Napoleonic Era, are scattered parenthetical remarks; as for instance the opening scene of *An Amazing Marriage*, "when crowned heads were running over Europe, crying out for charity's sake to be amused after their tiresome work of slaughter; and you know what a dread they have of moping." In Disraeli's *Ixion*, Mars is not popular in Olym-

[1] *The Bertrams*, 8.

pian circles, being despised as "a brute, more a bully than a hero. Not at all in the best set." Accordingly, since, as we are reminded by Phillips in his *Modern Europe*, "the British lion, turned ruminant, had been browsing in the pleasant pastures of peace to the melodious piping of Bright and Cobden," and since it had, when required, the less melodious taunting of Carlyle, it needed at this time no Aristophanes or Swift to mock at the madness of militarism.

In organized religion we see a paradoxical and yet natural enough operation of mortal psychology. In its primitive origin it sprang from two opposite sources, human innocence and human craft. In his innocence man believed that his immortal life must put on mortality, become incarnate in architecture, creed, ritual, before it could be lived. And in his craft he discovered that the incorruptible could be made to put on corruption,—to the great advantage of an entirely terrestrial ambition. These two factors, conjoined with the ubiquitous impulse to socialize feelings and thoughts as well as actions, have succeeded in so clothing and housing the wistful spirit which for itself asks no more than an assurance of some divinity dwelling without or within us, that its elaborate trappings and conspicuous paraphernalia have become shining marks for those who see the possible absurdity in this materializing of the spiritual.

Until recently, however, few shafts have penetrated to the heart of the discrepancy. Most of them have been aimed at the broad and inviting surface of obvious inconsistencies: indulgence in material luxury on the part of an institution founded to further the spiritual life; dominance of authority in a realm that should be free; flourishing of bigotry, greed, cruelty, hypocrisy, in the exclu-

sive garden of all the virtues; unlovely partisan disputes and recriminations in connection with the one thing that best can symbolize the brotherhood of man.

The distinction must here be made between the official representatives of the Church as such representatives, and as mere human beings. In this discussion therefore clergymen are not cited as cases in point unless they are clearly meant by their authors to be taken as clergy and not as men.

The Chadband of Dickens, for instance, and the Bute Crawley and Charles Honeyman of Thackeray, stand on their own feet, and share the common lot of satirized humanity; neither of these novelists having an arrow from his full quiver for the Church itself. Nor has Mrs. Gaskell, though her *North and South* hinges on the tragedy of Mr. Dale, an Anglican minister turned Dissenter. George Eliot spares likewise the Institution she had herself outgrown. Her Clerical Lives, her Reverends Irwine and Lyon, such diverse types as the modest Dinah Morris and the dominating Savonarola, are treated sympathetically, as is also the pitiful fanaticism of Lantern Yard. Lytton and Reade too grant the consent implied in silence. But other half speak out, briefly or at length.

Peacock is most impressed with the uselessness of an institution which seems to exist for the gratification of its dignitaries. The candid Mr. Sarcastic, after horrifying Miss Pennylove on the question of auctioning off brides, proceeds in his frank career: [1]

"I irreparably offended the Reverend Dr. Vorax by telling him, that having a nephew, whom I wished to shine in the church, I was on the lookout for a luminous butler, and a cook of solid

[1] *Melincourt*, II, 10. Cf. some other clerical cognomens, Gaster, Grovelgrub; and the way in which they were lived up to.

capacity, under whose joint tuition he might graduate. 'Who knows,' said I, 'but he may immortalize himself at the University, by giving his name to a pudding?'"

In his medieval tale he takes up the Church as an institution, with his favorite, back-handed, historical thrust. The Saxons, it seems, had attacked the Bangor monastery and killed twelve hundred monks: [1]

"This was the first overt act in which the Saxons set forth their new sense of a religion of peace. It is alleged, indeed, that these twelve hundred monks supported themselves by the labour of their own hands. If they did so, it was, no doubt, a gross heresy; but whether it deserved the castigation it received from Saint Augustin's proselytes, may be a question in polemics. * * * The rabble of Britons must have seen little more than the superficial facts that the lands, revenues, privileges, and so forth, which once belonged to Druids and so forth, now belonged to abbots, bishops, and so forth, who, like their extruded precursors, walked occasionally in a row, chanting unintelligible words, and never speaking in common language but to exhort the people to fight; having, indeed, better notions than their predecessors of building, apparel, and cookery; and a better knowledge of the means of obtaining good wine, and of the final purpose for which it was made."

To such as this we have Thackeray's counter-blast, with admonition,— [2]

"And don't let us give way to the vulgar prejudice that clergyman are an overpaid and luxurious body of men. * * * From reading the works of some modern writers of repute, you would fancy that a parson's life was passed in gorging himself with plum-pudding and port wine; and that his Reverence's fat chaps were always greasy with the crackling of tithe pigs. Cari-

[1] *The Misfortunes of Elphin*, 65. There is a similar hit through Friar Tuck, in *Maid Marian*, 30.

[2] *Book of Snobs*, 232.

caturists delight to represent him so: round, short-necked, pimple-faced, apoplectic, bursting out of waistcoat like a black-pudding, a shovel-hatted fuzz-wigged Silenus."

Whereas, he goes on at length to show, the reverse is the case. Both sides are more or less illustrative of the *argument ad hominem*.

It is Trollope who really writes of Clerical Snobs. The house-party at Chalicotes shelters a hierarchy. Mr. Robarts arrives,— [1]

"And then the vicar shook hands with Mrs. Proudie, in that deferential manner which is due from a vicar to his bishop's wife; and Mrs. Proudie returned the greeting with all that smiling condescension which a bishop's wife should show to a vicar."

From here the "young, flattered fool of a parson" is persuaded to go to Gatherum Castle and there gets into trouble. Brought to his senses, he meditates ruefully,— [2]

"Why had he come to this horrid place? Had he not everything at home which the heart of man could desire? No; the heart of man can desire deaneries—the heart, that is, of the man vicar; and the heart of the man dean can desire bishoprics; and before the eyes of the man bishop does there not loom the transcendental glory of Lambeth?"

The mixture of affectionate indulgence, shrewd amusement, and fundamental loyalty which made up Trollope's attitude is recorded in this symbolic portrait: [3]

"As the archdeacon stood up to make his speech, erect in the middle of that little square, he looked like an ecclesiastical

[1] *Framley Parsonage*, 23. On another occasion we are told that "Mrs. Proudie's manner might have showed to a very close observer that she knew the difference between a bishop and an archdeacon."

[2] *Ibid.*, 86.

[3] *The Warden*, 50.

statue placed there, as a fitting impersonation of the church militant here on earth; his shovel-hat, large, new, and well-pronounced, a churchman's hat in every inch, declared the profession as plainly as does the Quaker's broad brim; his heavy eyebrows, large, open eyes, and full mouth and chin expressed the solidity of his order; the broad chest, amply covered with fine cloth, told how well to do was its estate; one hand ensconced within his pocket evinced the practical hold which our mother church keeps on her temporal possessions; and the other, loose for action, was ready to fight, if need be, in her defense; and, below these, the decorous breeches, and neat black gaiters showing so admirably that well-turned leg, betokened the stability, the decency, the outward beauty and grace of our church establishment."

It is naturally in the Cathedral Series that clerical matters most abound, but they appear in other volumes, especially *The Bertrams*. Caroline Waddington, speaking of vicars, makes an empiric induction: [1]

"I judge by what I see. They are generally fond of eating, very cautious about their money, untidy in their own houses, and apt to go to sleep after dinner."

George Bertram, author of *The Romance of Scripture*, and *The Fallacies of Early History*, exponents of the Higher Criticism, over which "there was a comfortable row at Oxford," discusses religion with his cousin the curate. The attitude of prayer, he says, is beautiful from the communion it symbolizes. But imagine the attitude with no such communion,— [2]

"You will at once run down the whole gamut of humanity from Saint Paul to Pecksniff."

As to the practicability of freedom of thought, the churchman argues,—

[1] *The Bertrams*, 114.

[2] *Ibid.*, 303.

"If every man and every child is to select, how shall we ever have a creed? and if no creed, how shall we have a church?"

And the layman concludes for him,—

"And if no church, how then parsons? Follow it on, and it comes to that. But, in truth, you require too much, and so you get—nothing."

An ingenuous young girl in another story inquires,— [1]

"* * * what is all religion but washing black sheep white; making the black a little less black, scraping a spot white here and there?"

Whoever may be meant by Thackeray as "gross caricaturists," it cannot be Trollope, for even Mr. Slope is less repulsive than the alleged portraiture, and the Epicureans are models of refinement, and treated with a corresponding delicacy. Dr. Stanhope, sinecurist and pastor *in absentia*, had the appearance of "a benevolent, sleepy old lion." Like the rector at Clavering, and the Barchester archdeacon (who kept his jolly old volume of Rabelais locked in his study desk, but brought it out in the security of solitude as an antidote for the tedium of sermon-writing), he had a taste for "romances and poetry of the lightest and not always the most moral description." And like Dr. Grant, in *Mansfield Park*,— [2]

"He was thoroughly a *bon vivant*. * * * He had much to forgive in his own family, * * * and had forgiven everything—except inattention to his dinner. * * * That he had religious convictions must be believed; but he rarely obtruded them, even on his children."

The dignified bishop, on hearing a startling piece of news,— [3]

[1] *Sir Harry Hotspur*, 93. [2] *Barchester Towers*, 77.
[3] *The Warden*, 32.

"* * * did not whistle. We believe that they lose the power of doing so on being consecrate; and that in these days we might as easily meet a corrupt judge as a whistling bishop."

The subject of foreign missions is glanced at in a conversation between Sowerby and Harold Smith; but on the the whole it is another neglected topic. Disraeli observes in *Sybil* that a missionary from Tahiti might be spared for needed work in Wodgate, England. The rest in silence, until Butler, post-Victorian, exposes, with some of his choicest irony, the fallacy that underlies all proselyting logic.

Brontë and Kingsley are openly partisan, with a strain of the crudeness inseparable from antagonistic warmth. They are also on the same side,[1] the broad-church position, opposed to Tractarian principles as much as to Catholicism itself.

The real acid of the first chapter of *Shirley*, entitled *Levitical*, and promising only "cold lentils and vinegar without oil," is not poured upon the heads of the three curates and the rector, failures though they all were as spiritual shepherds, but upon the contemporary situation. In 1812, the author says, there was no Pastoral Aid nor Additional Curates Society to help out rectors:[2]

"The present successors of the apostles, disciples of Dr. Pusey and tools of the Propaganda, were at that time being hatched under cradle-blankets, or undergoing regeneration by nursery-baptism in wash-hand-basins. You could not have guessed by looking at any one of them that the Italian-ironed double frills of its net cap surrounded the brows of a pre-ordained specially sanctified successor of Saint Paul, Saint Peter or Saint

[1] Although Kingsley threw *Shirley* aside because the opening seemed to him vulgar. Harriet Martineau said the same of *Villette*.

[2] *Shirley*, I, 2.

John; nor could you have foreseen in the folds of its long night-gown the white surplice in which it was hereafter cruelly to exercise the souls of its parishioners, and strangely to non-plus its old-fashioned vicar by flourishing aloft in a pulpit the shirt-like raiment which had never before waved higher than the reading-desk."

"Yet even then," she adds, "the rare but precious plant existed—three rods of Aaron blossomed within a circuit of twenty miles." Their clerical functions are summed up later by the gardener William: [1]

"They're allus magnifying their office: it is a pity but their office could magnify them; but it does nought o' t' soart."

The autobiographical heroine of *Villette* recounts her experience of being subjected to persuasive priestly exhortation, and ironically repeats the phrases: [2]

"I half realized myself in that condition also; passed under discipline, moulded, trained, inoculated, and so on."

She is enabled to resist, because,

"* * * there was a hollowness within, and a flourish around 'Holy Church' which tempted me but moderately."

She discusses at length a Papist pamphlet left on her desk for her perusal: [3]

"The voice of that sly little book was a honeyed voice; its accents were all unction and balm. Here roared no utterance of Rome's thunders, no blasting of the breath of her displeasure. * * * Far be it from her to threaten or to coerce; her wish was to guide and win. *She* persecute? Oh dear no! not on any account! * * * It was a canting, sentimental, shallow little book, yet * * * I was amused with the gambols

[1] *Shirley*, I, 355. [2] *Villette*, II, 186. [3] *Villette*, II, 210–11.

of this unlicked wolf-cub muffled in the fleece, and mimicking the bleat of a guileless lamb. Portions of it reminded me of certain Wesleyan Methodist tracts I had once read when a child; they were flavoured with about the same seasoning of excitation to fanaticism. * * * I smiled then over this dose of maternal tenderness, coming from the ruddy old lady of the Seven Hills; smiled, too, at my own disinclination, not to say disability, to meet their melting favours."

As her reason is not swayed by the arguments of the "Moloch Church," neither is her fancy kindled by its ritual: [1]

"Neither full procession nor high mass, nor swarming tapers, nor swinging censers, nor ecclesiastical millinery, nor celestial jewelry, touched my imagination a whit. What I saw struck me as tawdry, not grand; as grossly material, not poetically spiritual."

Kingsley widens his criticism from the personal to the social point of view. He objects to luxury not so much because it shows up the luxurious as because it takes away even the necessities from those who have not, to add yet more luxuries to those that have. He questions— [2]

"* * * how a really pious and universally respected archbishop, living within a quarter of a mile of one of the worst *infernos* of destitution, disease, filth, and profligacy—can yet find it in his heart to save £120,000 out of church revenues, and leave it to his family; * * * how Irish bishops can reconcile it to their consciences to leave behind them, one and all, large fortunes * * * taken from the pockets of a Roman Catholic population, whom they have been put there to convert to Protestantism for the last three hundred years—with what success, all the world knows."

[1] *Villette*, II, 220.

[2] *Alton Locke*, 186.

Moreover, because he sees in the church a possible vanguard to civilization, he rebels against its retrogressive and obstructive policy. He laments that the working men do not trust the clergy: [1]

"They suspect them to be mere tubs to the whale—mere substitutes for education, slowly and late adopted, in order to stop the mouths of the importunate. They may misjudge the clergy; but whose fault is it if they do? * * * Every spiritual reform since the time of John Wesley, has had to establish itself in the teeth of insult, calumny, and persecution. Every ecclesiastical reform comes not from within, but from without your body. Everywhere we see the clergy, * * * proclaiming themselves the advocates of Toryism, * * * chosen exclusively from the classes which crush us down; * * * commanding us to swallow down, with faith as passive and implicit as that of a Papist, the very creeds from which their own bad example, and their scandalous neglect, have * * * alienated us; * * * betraying in every tract, in every sermon, an ignorance of the doubts, the feelings, the very language of the masses, which would be ludicrous, were it not accursed before God and man."

Meredith expresses the same idea, with the difference that he does not speak apologetically from within, but with the unqualified disapproval of the outsider. Jenny Denham, an incisive and thoughtful woman, says,[2]

[1] *Alton Locke*, 229–30. Cf. 205ff. for an equally forceful presentation of the other side through the eloquent rebuke to illogical complaints, given by Eleanor Staunton. It is in *Yeast* that Papacy is satirized, a typical hit being the unconscious irony of Vieuxbois' assertion,—"'I do not think that we have any right in the nineteenth century to contest an opinion which the fathers of the Church gave in the fourth." 114. Alton Locke also says,—"A man-servant, a soldier and a Jesuit, are to me the three great wonders of humanity—three forms of moral suicide, for which I never had the slightest gleam of sympathy, or even comprehension." 187.

[2] *Beauchamp's Career*, 622.

"My experience of the priest in our country is, that he has abandoned—he's dead against the only cause that can justify and keep up a Church; the cause of the poor—the people. He is a creature of the moneyed class. I look on him as a pretender."

In his subtle way Meredith satirizes the Catholic Church by having the Countess de Saldar take refuge in and approve of it. Its great asset is that its democracy includes even tailors. That it is the only true spiritual home for a true gentleman she proves by citing an example. A noble knight does not hesitate at telling a flat falsehood to save a lady, being safe in morality because "his priest was handy." Her nature is defined as the truly religious, that is, one with need of vicarious strength and a sense of renewed absolution. Another exponent is Constance Asper, in *Diana of the Crossways*, whose boudoir was filled with expensive Catholic equipments, affording "every invitation to meditate in luxury on an ascetic religiousness."

Butler was not content to view the Church from his external position with the silence of George Eliot or the casual comments of Meredith. The intensity of his iconoclasm demanded full expression,—kept, however, from crudeness by his ironic finish, and from injustice by his fundamental reasonableness. In *Erewhon* his chief point is the perfunctory character of established religion. The Erewhonians have two distinct economic currencies, one of which is supposed to be *the* system, and is patronized by all who wished to be considered respectable. Yet its funds have no direct value in the community, whose actual business is conducted on the other commercial system. The Musical Banks excel in architecture, and keep up a routine of receiving and paying checks. But their patrons are for the most part ladies and some students from the College of Unreason. Mrs. Nosnibor, a staunch share-

holder, deplores this apparent lack of public interest, and remarks that it is "indeed melancholy to see what little heed people paid to the most precious of all institutions." Her guest observes,— [1]

"I could say nothing in reply, but I have ever been of opinion that the greater part of mankind do approximately know where they get that which does them good."

The Musical Bankers not only protest too much as to the ascendancy of their institution, but consistently depreciate the other: [2]

"Even those who to my certain knowledge kept only just enough money at the Musical Banks to swear by, would call the other banks (where their securities really lay) cold, deadening, paralyzing, and the like."

As to the cashiers and managers,— [3]

"Few people would speak quite openly and freely before them, which struck me as a very bad sign. * * * The less thoughtful of them did not seem particularly unhappy, but many were plainly sick at heart, though perhaps they hardly knew it, and would not have owned to being so. Some few were opponents of the whole system; but these were liable to be dismissed from their employment at any moment, and this rendered them very careful, for a man who had once been a cashier at a Musical Bank was out of the field for other employment, and was gen-

[1] *Erewhon* 151.

[2] *Ibid.*, 155.

[3] *Ibid.*, 157. Cf. Kingsley's statement that the working men distrust the clergy. In *The Way of All Flesh*, Butler observes, "A clergyman, again, can hardly ever allow himself to look facts fairly in the face." 103. Cf. also his *Note Books*, "In a way the preachers believe what they preach, but it is as men who have taken a bad ten pound note and refuse to look at the evidence that makes for its badness, though, if the note were not theirs, they would see at a glance that it was not a good one." 190.

erally unfitted for it by reason of that course of treatment which was commonly called his education."

Erewhon Revisited deals more specifically with the miraculous and doctrinal side of Christianity, mirrored in the account of the origin of Sunchildism and its connection with the old Musical Banks. The two main characters are Hanky and Panky, Professors respectively of Wordly and Unworldly Wisdom. They are carefully distinguished: [1]

"Panky was the greater humbug of the two, for he would humbug even himself—a thing, by the way, not very hard to do; and yet he was the less successful humbug; * * * Hanky was the mere common, superficial, perfunctory Professor, who, being a Professor, would of course profess, but would not lie more than was in the bond. * * * Panky, on the other hand, was hardly human; he had thrown himself so earnestly into his work, that he had become a living lie. If he had had to play the part of Othello he would have blacked himself all over, and very likely have smothered his Desdemona in good earnest. Hanky would hardly have blacked himself behind the ears, and his Desdemona would have been quite safe."

The School is another favorite satirical topic. The only novelists who refrain from depicting the shortcomings of the educational system are Disraeli, Reade, Mrs. Gaskell, and George Eliot. On the public side, Meredith might be added, as the theme of *Richard Feverel*, though educational, is made an individual matter.

The adverse opinion handed down on the methods and

[1] *Erewhon Revisited*, 39-40. Panky, who wore his Sunchild suit backward, as a matter of dogma, is supposed to represent the Anglican, and Hanky the Jesuit. The broad church is represented by the far superior Dr. Downie. Butler's positive philosophy is expressed, though still in the indirect manner, in the account of Ydgrun and the Ydgrunites: *Erewhon*, Chap. XVII.

results of the prevailing system is more unanimous than is the case with other subjects. On the main indictments, inefficiency and cruelty in the lower schools, and inefficiency and carelessness in the higher, there is no minority report. On the whole, the Victorians were innocent of the partisanship that arose later over the great question of Culture versus Efficiency as an educational ideal. The primary stages might be allowed a modicum of the practical, though Gradgrind's "facts" are failures, and Squeers stands in solitary glory as an advocate of applied arts and manual training. Mr. Tulliver is in line with his *Zeitgeist* in fondly supposing the best thing he can do for Tom is to send him to an expensive private school, to learn Latin along with the son of Lawyer Wakem. An education was tacitly defined as that which makes a gentleman of you. And though no one would dissent from Thackeray's dictum that "all the world is improving except the gentlemen," neither would any one suppose that the definition might be modified or expanded.

A number realize that education begins at home. The close father and son relationship satirized in the case of Sir Austin and Richard because it was too close and inflexible, is presented as a beautiful ideal in those of Pisistratus and Mr. Caxton, Kenelm and Squire Chillingly, Clive and Colonel Newcome, and the Duke of Omnium and his sons.[1]

In David Copperfield's recollections of the metallic Murdstone, Arthur Clennam's of his childhood's Sabbath and Alton Locke's of his mother's fearful bigotry, we get glimpses into the pathos of the old Puritan disci-

[1] In *The Duke's Children*. Cf. *The Small House at Allington*, 498, for remarks on inadequate parents. Perhaps Meredith's picture in lighter tones, of Harry Richmond and his irresponsible but aspiring father, might be mentioned.

pline. These are too sad for satire. Butler, no less sad, is also angry enough to brand it with his caustic wit. Theobald and Christina Pontifex are texts for a satiric sermon on parental incompetence, no less disastrous although "All was done in love, anxiety, timidity, stupidity, and impatience." After the scene in which Theobald, having punished little Ernest severely and quite wantonly, rang the bell for prayers, "red-handed as he was," his visitor reflects that perhaps it was fortunate for his host— [1]

"* * * that our prayers were seldom marked by any very encouraging degree of response, for if I had thought there was the slightest chance of my being heard I should have prayed that some one might ere long treat him as he had treated Ernest."

The keynote of this most Christian system is unconsciously hit upon by the bewildered little lad himself, who later concludes,— [2]

"* * * that he had duties towards everybody, lying in wait for him upon every side, but that nobody had any duties towards him."

Formal education naturally falls into the school and college divisions. We have the former presented dramatically by Brontë in *Jane Eyre* (and more impressionistically in *Villette*), by Thackeray in *The Fatal Boots* and *Vanity Fair*, by Butler in *The Way of All Flesh*, and by the zealous specialist in that field. It has been counted up that Dickens deals with twenty-eight schools and mentions a dozen others.[3] The most important are in *Nicholas Nickleby*, *Dombey and Son*, *David Copperfield*, and *Hard Times*.

[1] *Way of All Flesh*, 98.
[2] *Ibid.*, 125.
[3] By J. L. Hughes, in *Dickens as an Educator*,

Major Bagstock is contemplating young Rob, a product of that school where they never taught honor, but were "particularly strong in the engendering of hypocrisy," and deduces that "it never pays to educate that sort of people." Whereupon— [1]

"The simple father was beginning to submit that he hoped his son, the quondam Grinder, huffed and cuffed, and flogged and badged, and taught, as parrots are, by a brute jobbed into his place of schoolmaster with as much fitness for it as a hound, might not have been educated on quite a right plan in some undiscovered respect, when Mr. Dombey, angrily repeating 'The usual return!' led the major away."

Young David Copperfield profits little by losing Murdstone and gaining Creakle. The aspect of this pleasant pedagogue so fascinates the gaze of the boys that they cannot keep to their books. When a culprit is called before the tribunal,— [2]

"Mr. Creakle cuts a joke before he beats him, and we laugh at it,—miserable little dogs, we laugh, with our visages as white as ashes, and our hearts sinking into our boots. * * * Miserable little propitiators of a remorseless Idol, how abject we were to him! What a launch in life I think it now, on looking back, to be so mean and servile to a man of such parts and pretensions!"

From this infant purgatory the step to the college seems a long one, for that is by comparison an Elysium, however inane and frivolous. Those whose satiric arrows speed thither are Peacock, Lytton, Trollope, Kingsley, and Butler. Thackeray should be mentioned for his two chapters on University Snobs, and the preceding one on

[1] *Dombey and Son*, II, 313.

[2] *David Copperfield*, I, 92.

Clerical Snobs, in which he describes the colleges as the last strongholds of Feudalism; concluding— [1]

"Why is the poor College servitor to wear that name and that badge still? Because Universities are the last places into which Reform penetrates. But now that she can go to College and back for five shillings, let her travel down thither."

Squire Headlong inquires in vain at Oxford for "men of taste and philosophers." Scythrop and Sir Telegraph were both cured at college of their love for learning. Desmond describes the university system as a "deep-laid conspiracy against the human understanding, * * * a ridiculous and mischievous farce." But Dr. Folliott refused to succumb. Alluding to some one who cannot quote Greek, he adds,— [2]

"But I think he must have finished his education at some very rigid college, where a quotation, or any other overt act showing acquaintance with classical literature, was visited with a severe penalty. For my part, I made it my boast that I was not to be so subdued. I could not be abated of a single quotation by all the bumpers in which I was fined."

The same critic says elsewhere of the curriculum: [3]

"Everything for everybody, science for all, schools for all, rhetoric for all, law for all, physic for all, words for all, and sense for none."

Pelham testifies that at Eton he was never taught a syllable of English literature, laws, or history; and was laughed at for reading Pope out of school. On his graduation from Cambridge, a place that "reeked with vulgar-

[1] Cf. the beginning of same chapter for the school system generally.
[2] *Crochet Castle*, 115.
[3] *Ibid.*, 32.

ity," he is congratulated by his tutor for having been passably decent. Whereupon he observes,— [1]

"Thus closed my academical career. He who does not allow that it passed creditably to my teachers, profitably to myself, and beneficially to the world, is a narrow-minded and illiterate man, who knows nothing of the advantages of modern education."

Trollope in *The Bertrams*, and Kingsley in *Yeast and Alton Locke*, have a few words for the subject, but add no new idea, except that Alton voices the disgust of the students themselves with their Alma Mater. It is this same young neophyte who is advised by Dean Winnstay to go to some such college as St. Mark's, which "might, by its strong Church principles, give the best antidote to any little remaining taint of sans-culottism."

In Butler's Erewhonian Colleges of Unreason the leading subject is Hypothetics, and the most honored Chairs are those of Inconsistency and Evasion, both required courses. Genius and originality are resolutely discouraged, it being a man's business "to think as his neighbors do, for Heaven help him if he thinks good what they count bad." These Erewhonian professors, by the way, might have adduced as evidence the well-known, horrified exclamation of Mary Shelley at the suggestion that her son

[1] *Pelham*, 13. Cf. his *Kenelm Chillingly* for a discussion between Uncle John, the idealistic vicar and Mivers, the utilitarian man of the world, as to educational values. The latter believes the parson's rêgime would produce "either a pigeon or a ring-dove, a credulous booby or a sentimental milk-sop." The former makes a thoughtful distinction between the public school, which ripens talent but stifles genius, and the private, which is too enervating, making of the boys either prigs or sissies. It is Mivers who advocates adapting the style of education to the disposition of the individual; and insuring development by putting the youthful mind in contact with the most original and innovating thinkers of the day.

be sent where he would be taught to think for himself. By refusing to "think like other people," a man may become a poet and even a beautiful, ineffectual angel, but he cannot lead a comfortable nor a really effectual life. The problem as to who may safely be intrusted to lead public opinion, and who are safest as followers, is an intricate one, but it is certainly true that a sane and modest agnosticism is not necessarily synonymous with "the art of sitting gracefully on a fence," which Butler concludes was brought to its greatest perfection in the Colleges of Unreason.

On the subjects of Literature and the Press too much has been said to be ignored, but not much of any great consequence. Trollope took Journalism as a satiric province, with some little aid from Meredith. He also takes a shot, not too well aimed, at the current humanitarian fiction which purposes to set the world right in shilling numbers. He adds,— [1]

"Of all such reformers, Mr. Sentiment is the most powerful. It is incredible the number of evil practices he has put down. It is to be feared he will soon lack subjects, and that when he has made the working classes comfortable, and got bitter beer put into proper sized pint bottles, there will be nothing left for him to do. Mr. Sentiment is certainly a very powerful man, and perhaps not the less so that his good poor people are so very good; his hard rich people so very hard, and the genuinely honest so very honest. * * * Divine peeresses are no longer interesting, though possessed of every virtue; but a pattern peasant or an immaculate manufacturing hero may talk as much twaddle as one of Mrs. Ratcliffe's heroines, and still be listened to."

A favorite theme, especially among the earlier writers, is the pose of pessimism, alien to the self-satisfied opti-

[1] *The Warden*, 151. This is really more unjust to Dickens than the flings at Dr. Pessimist Anti-cant are to Carlyle. It is interesting to note that the very measure meted to Lytton by Dickens is measured to him by Trollope.

mistic spirit which prevailed with little opposition—except from James Thompson and Matthew Arnold—from Byron to Hardy.

The Honorable Mr. Listless finds the volumes of modern literature "very consolatory and congenial" to his feelings: [1]

"There is, as it were, a delightful north-east wind, an intellectual blight breathing through them; a delicious misanthropy and discontent, that demonstrates the nullity of virtue and energy, and puts me in good humour with myself and sofa."

Pelham perceives— [2]

"* * * an unaccountable prepossession among all persons, to imagine that whatever seems gloomy must be profound, and whatever is cheerful must be shallow. They have put poor Philosophy into deep mourning, and given her a coffin for a writing desk, and a skull for an inkstand."

Ganymede anticipates that Apollo's new poem will be very popular, for "it is all about moonlight and the misery of existence." [3]

It is in Meredith that we find the greatest point and depth in literary criticism, as in most other things. Under cover of apology for his own method of psychological analysis, he manages to convey his impression of those who tell and who love the story for the story's sake. He cannot avoid, he explains, the slow start and detailed exposition in which he unfolds the situation, and adds: [4]

"This it is not necessary to do when you are set astride the enchanted horse of the Tale, which leaves the man's mind at home while he performs the deeds befitting him: he can indeed

[1] *Nightmare Abbey*, 50.
[2] *Pelham*, 301.
[3] *Ixion*, 282.
[4] *One of Our Conquerors*, 10.

be rapid. Whether more active, is a question asking for your notions of the governing element in the composition of man, and of his present business here. * * * All ill-fortuned minstrel who has by fateful direction been brought to see with distinctness that man is not as much comprised in external features as the monkey, will be devoted to the task of the fuller portraiture."

It is Meredith also who says the last word on the English, as English. They are indeed the real objects under all these disguises of their activities, but they are not often synthesized and called by name. Yet— [1]

"An actually satiric man in an English circle, that does not resort to the fist for a reply to him, may almost satiate the excessive fury roused in his mind by an illogical people of a provocative prosperity, * * * They give him so many opportunities."

He seizes one of them by symbolizing England in the Duvidney sisters; composed of such, it becomes— [2]

"* * * a vast body of passives and negatives, living by precept, according to rules of precedent, and supposing themselves to be righteously guided because of their continuing undisturbed. * * * mixed with an ancient Hebrew fear of offense to an inscrutable Lord, eccentrically appeasable through the dreary iteration of the litany of sinfulness. * * * Satirists in their fervours might be near it to grasp it, if they could be moved to moral distinctness, mental intention, with a preference of strong plain speech over the crack of their whips."

He had already decided, in *Beauchamp's Career*, that "It is not too much to say that a domination of the Intellect in England would at once and entirely alter the face of the country." Reade agrees with this opinion,

[1] *One of Our Conquerors*, 72. [2] *Ibid.*, 228.

only he says bluntly that one is "an ass * * * to have brains in a country where brains are a crime." This national stupidity and sentimentality are made impregnable by national complacency. Lytton remarks on the egotistic nature of British patriotism: [1]

"The vanity of the Frenchman consists (as I have somewhere read) in belonging to so great a country; but the vanity of the Englishman exults in the thought that so great a country belongs to himself."

These criticisms are all from within. Disraeli is able to contribute one from without. He describes the British through his Jewish Besso: [2]

"There is not a race so proud, so wilful, so rash and so obstinate. They live in a misty clime, on raw meats, and wines of fire. They laugh at their fathers, and never say a prayer. They pass their days in the chase, gaming, and all violent courses. They have all the power of the State, and all its wealth; and when they can wring no more from their peasants, they plunder the kings of India."

Nevertheless they all, even the Hebrew within their parliamentary halls, believed in the English character and the civilization it was blunderingly working out. The most incorrigible satirist of that civilization was Peacock (who often, we suspect, gets carried away by his own eloquence), and in his fervent summary of almost all our public failures, he hints in the very phrasing, although ironically,

[1] *England and the English*, 21.

[2] *Tancred*, 242. It is a race also that "having little imagination, takes refuge in reason, and carefully locks the door when the steed is stolen." 379. Moreover, the Oriental says of the European what the latter applied in the course of time to the American,—he "talks of progress, because, by an ingenious application of some scientific acquirements, he has established a society which has mistaken comfort for civilization." 227.

at the possibility of these failures being transformed into successes. Sir Telegraph Paxarett, accused of extravagance, retorts with a conditional promise of retrenchment: [1]

"When ecclesiastical dignitaries imitate the temperance and humility of the founder of that religion by which they feed and flourish; when the man in place acts on the principles which he professed while he was out; when borough electors will not sell their suffrage, nor their representatives their votes; when poets are not to be hired for the maintenance of any opinion; when learned divines can afford to have a conscience; when universities are not one hundred years in knowledge behind all the rest of the world; when young ladies speak as they think, and when those who shudder at a tale of the horror of slavery will deprive their own palates of a sweet taste, for the purpose of contributing all in their power to its extinction:—why then, Forester, I will lay down my barouche."

Satire, being frankly a destructive process, makes no pretense of supplementing its iconoclasm by reconstruction. But such implication of reform as may lurk in the criticism that paves the way may be looked for more assuredly than elsewhere in attacks on institutions. Such criticism is neither lowered by the recrimination that puts satire of individuals below the normal satiric level, nor elevated by the artistic detachment that lifts satire of human nature above it. For it is not in the too small lump of the solitary specimen that the leaven can best work, nor yet in the too large mass of the whole human race. It is in the unit between these two extremes, the body politic or social or religious or educational, that it may best perform its fermenting ministrations.

Even so, however, the idealism of the Victorian novel-

[1] *Melincourt*, II, 47.

ists did not take this positive turn. English genius has on the whole contributed its share to the anthology of Utopian vision, even to the furnishing of the name, but the nineteenth century, preëminent in criticism and speculation, venting more talk about it than all the other centuries put together, has to its credit in this line, aside from *Erewhon* and *The Coming Race*, only Morris's *News from Nowhere*, and that is too naïve in its simplification of human nature and too absurd in its glorification of medievalism to be taken seriously. More carefully thought out as an Ideal State, more searching in its seriousness, more pertinent in its satire, and more constructive in its conclusion, than any of these, is the American product, Bellamy's *Looking Backward.*

The Victorians did their looking backward literally from their own present instead of an imagined future. And since in so doing they did for the most part but cast their eye on prospects drear, and since they shrank from a future they could only guess and fear if they thought about it at all, they wisely and practically spent themselves on the present. And because of this acceptance of the present and all its institutions as a whole, they could couch their lances only against this or that detail, not against the challenge of civilization itself.

The following instances show a characteristic difference in their resemblance. "In England, poverty is a crime," exclaims Lytton in the nineteenth century. The observation is ironic, the tone scornful, and the object of the ironic scorn is the snobbishness of those who from the heights of wealth look down upon and despise the poor. The rebuke is intended for the alien attitude toward that portion of society which we may expect, according to Biblical authority, always to have with us. Poverty itself is a mys-

terious dispensation, having indeed many discernible compensations, and ever mitigable by applied morality.

"Poverty is the only crime," echoes Bernard Shaw in the twentieth century. His assertion is meant literally, the tone is decisive, and the indictment is lodged against society at large for being so stupid and inefficient as to permit such a canker, pernicious but curable, to infect its body.

To remedy the supercilious attitude toward the poor is still to leave poverty intact and in permanent possession of the field. To remedy the criminal carelessness which tolerates its presence is to abolish the thing itself.

But even if the twentieth century has stated the problem, it has not yet solved it. And while neither the statement nor the solution of the nineteenth is reckoned adequate to-day, still the Victorians did accomplish something if not much, and all we can say for ourselves is that we have not accomplished much, if something. Moreover, to flatter ourselves that we are the first to discover the social onus of poverty and other ills, is to ignore the contributions not only of the novelists but of Carlyle, Ruskin, Morris, and Henry George. When the remaining four-fifths of our century shall have been added to history, we may perhaps applaud ourselves. At present it will do us no harm to render unto Victorianism the acknowledgment that is its due.

CHAPTER III

TYPES

For that form of satire which deals with actual individuals, photographed or caricatured, the designation *personal* is sufficiently descriptive. But for that which deals with fictitious individuals, wherein the models that sat for the portraits have passed through the imaginative process that makes their portraiture a work of art, there is no satisfactory name. *Typical*, in distinction from *individual* and *institutional*, is tolerably expressive, but a term to be apologized for. The school of art known as realistic, which was theoretically adopted by the nineteenth century, repudiates creations that are "mere types," and claims for itself the achievement of true individuals. The sign of individuality is a discordant complexity. Every man may have his humour but he is not always in it. He may be ruled by a master passion, but the rule is not a monopolistic autocracy. Its supremacy is constantly disputed and threatened by mob rebellion. Civil war is the usual régime, and the attainment of a stabilized government is rare.

Tamburlaine, Volpone, Othello, Tartuffe, Blifil, are not untrue, but they are only partial truths. We see much, undoubtedly the most significant and dominating traits, but we cannot see all when the searchlight is concentrated on a single spot. Agamemnon, Hamlet, Tom Jones, Jaffeir, swayed, perplexed, inconsistent, at once infinite and abject, are more nearly full length and complete drawings.

Milton's Satan becomes humanized when, entering the human abode, he grows hesitant, half regretful, half eager, a prey to conflicting emotions and cross purposes.

Yet those desirable factors of art, unity and emphasis, must be secured, and they can be secured only by throwing the emphasis on some one feature, thus giving unity to the character. In the field of satire a classification based on these qualities is the more easily made in that any given character is usually satirized for some particular trait, although the problem does not end there. We may construct encampments for our army of characters—and in Victorian fiction they come in battalions—and we may label them; but we shall find it less simple to assign the companies to their own barracks and keep them there.

The Father of the Marshalsea is a snob. He is also hypocritical and foolish. Moreover, he is a sentimentalist and an epicurean. Withal he is not villainous, but more pathetic than execrable. He has no apparent kinship with the Countess de Saldar, yet she also may be described in the above terms. The enumeration would not show the difference. Thus not only does each real character refuse to be known by one name and one only, but the congregation assembled under any one denomination shows such diversity as to make the category itself questionable. Mrs. Mackensie and Mrs. Clennam, Mr. Dombey and Bertie Stanhope, Tom Tulliver and Sir Willoughby Patterne, are all egoists; but they would find little congeniality in their mutual egoism.

All that can be done is to indicate the range and the concentration of the main types. These types will of course represent those elements in human character which seem to the satirist such deflections from an ideal as are amenable to comic exposure and perhaps correction. It does

not seem possible to reduce them to fewer than seven or eight heads, as follows: hypocrisy, folly, snobbishness, sentimentality, egoism, fanaticism, and vulgarity.

These various fields have their specialists. Hypocrisy, including sycophancy and deliberate imposture of any kind, belongs to Dickens, with Thackeray, Trollope, and others following not far behind. He leads also in depiction of folly and incompetence, though these prevail widely in Victorian fiction; and Meredith excels in portrayal of mental incapacity and fallacy in reasoning. It is the latter who comes to the front with sentimentality and egoism, having but few predecessors. Thackeray handles snobbishness in all its ramifications of worldliness and elegant *ennui*. But although he contributes the name, the thing exists on the pages of Lytton, Disraeli, Trollope, and Dickens. Fanaticism, bigotry, all sorts of fads, make another common ground for Peacock and Butler, and crop up in Reade, Brontë, and Kingsley. Coarse vulgarity is the rarest of all, the Age of Propriety refusing to transplant this weed from life to literature, but it is admitted by Dickens, Thackeray, Reade, and Trollope.

Since satire is usually directed against the special thing in which the satirist feels superior, we may deduce the favorite Victorian virtues to have been sincerity, wisdom, rationality, refinement, and a sense of proportion; a large order, but the nineteenth century would scorn a smaller.

Dickens did not invent the hypocrite, nor did he supply anything new to the investigation of the nature of this most subtile of all the beasts of the field. He himself had not the subtlety to search out causes and discover possible extenuations and values in a thing he simply and flatly abhorred and saw no excuse for. What he does furnish is an immense amount of data, with many variations, show-

ing *in extenso* this aspect of human nature. At least three dozen of his three hundred characters exhibit the seamy side of scheming and deceit. From *Pickwick*, wherein Mr. Winkle, unfrocked as to skates and branded as a humbug and an impostor because he assumed an accomplishment when he had it not, to *Edwin Drood*, harboring Luke Honeythunder, professional philanthropist, who, "Always something in the nature of a Boil upon the face of society, * * * expanded into an inflammatory Wen in Minor Canon Corner," no volume is entirely free from the trail of the serpent.

Most of the humbugs and impostors are, like the philanthropist, professional. Dodson and Fogg, Sergeant Buzfuz, Mr. Tulkinghorn, turn their intrigues into legal channels; Mr. Bumble and Mrs. Mann, into civic; Dr. Blimber and Mrs. Pipchin, into pedagogic. Mr. Merdle tricks the financial world, though Mr. Casby, operating on a smaller scale, makes himself much more of a fraud. Mr. Crummles, Mrs. Gamp, Mrs. Crupp, in their various capacities, abstain from giving their patrons value received. The Barnacles, parasites clinging to the Ship of State, pose as public servants and benefactors.

It happens, however, that those who confine their dissembling and pretense to private life are of the highest hypocritical quality. Mr. Mantalini expertly bamboozles his wife. Mrs. Sparsit successfully plays her part for the benefit of Mr. Bounderby. Mr. Pumblechook protests too much to little Pip, now grown up and prosperous, but carries it off with an air. Mr. Carker, who "hid himself behind his sleek, hushed, crouching manner, and his ivory smile," and who, "sly of manner, sharp of tooth, soft of foot, watchful of eye, oily of tongue, cruel of heart, nice of habit, sat with a dainty steadfastness and patience at

his work, as if he were waiting at a mouse's hole," finally catches his mouse, though only to be eluded again.

A perfect modern instance of the bubble pricked by the ancient Socratic method is that of Mr. Curdle, eminent dramatic critic. He has been talking big about the Unities of the Drama. Nicholas innocently asks what they might be. He is informed: [1]

"Mr. Curdle coughed and considered. 'The unities, sir,' he said, 'are a completeness—a kind of universal dovetailedness with regard to place and time—a sort of a general oneness, if I may be allowed to use so strong an expression. I take those to be the dramatic unities, so far as I have been enabled to bestow attention upon them, and I have read much upon the subject and thought much. I find, running through the performances of this child,' said Mr. Curdle, turning to the Phenomenon, 'a unity of feeling, a breadth, a light and shade, a warmth of colouring, a tone, a harmony, a glow, an artistical development of original conceptions, which I look for, in vain, among older performers. I don't know whether I make myself understood?'

"'Perfectly,' replied Nicholas.

"'Just so,' said Mr. Curdle, pulling up his neckcloth. 'That is my definition of the unities of the drama.'"

The great trio, Pecksniff, Bagstock, and Heep, occur in the three successive novels of the six years ending with the mid-century. Pecksniff is the most gratuitous offender, for he encases himself in piety and benevolence, and inserts his falseness into every word, every deed, every relation of life. Heep's specious humility is as unrelaxed and vigilant, but it is more of a means to an end and not, like Pecksniff's, an end in itself. He fawns and flatters and cheats for the benefits to be derived from such policies.

[1] *Nicholas Nickleby*, I, 415.

Thus slippery are the steps of Uriah's ladder. He has, moreover, a word of self-defense which forces his educational training to share the responsibility. When he is reminded by Copperfield that greed and cunning always overreach themselves, he retorts by implicating the school where he was taught "from nine o'clock to eleven, that labour was a curse; and from eleven o'clock to one, that it was a blessing and a cheerfulness and a dignity," and so on. Major Bagstock resembles Heep in being servile in manner instead of pompously patronizing; but while Chesterton may be right in calling him a more subtle hypocrite than Pecksniff,[1] it is also true that the Major's hypocrisy is not quite his whole existence, as it is of both Pecksniff and Heep. He is at least a gourmand in addition, if nothing more.

Before Dickens, in our period, the only character to exemplify this trait, aside from Peacock's Feathernest, is Lytton's Robert Beaufort, in *Night and Morning*. The author remarks in a later preface that this character might be rated as a forerunner to Pecksniff; but he is in reality more of the Blifil type, his brother Philip acting as his Tom Jones.

Lytton, however, is inclined to discuss the subject by the way. In one of his earlier novels he says,— [2]

"Honesty—patriotism—religion—these have had their hypocrites for life;—but passion permits only momentary dissemblers."

In a later one he analyzes a dubious citizen: [3]

[1] In his *Dickens*, 120. he adds, "Dickens does mean it as a deliberate light on Mr. Dombey's character that he basks with a fatuous calm in the blazing sun of Major Bagstock's tropical and offensive flattery."

[2] *Godolphin*, 198.

[3] *Maltravers*, 155.

"But our banker was really a charitable man, and a benevolent man, and a sincere believer. How, then, was he a hypocrite? Simply because he professed to be far *more* charitable, *more* benevolent, and *more* pious than he really was. His reputation had now arrived to that degree of immaculate polish that the smallest breath, which would not have tarnished the character of another man, would have fixed an indelible stain upon his."

The same might be said of another banker, the respectable Bulstrode, whom George Eliot presents with no satire and an almost pitiful sympathy.

The wealthy plebeian Avenel is embarrassed by the inopportune arrival of his rustic sister in the presence of his aristocratic guests. By a brilliant counter-stroke of a candid and courageous confession, he stems the tide and wins the day. But in private he is very severe with the poor culprit, and then admits to himself, "I'm a cursed humbug, * * * but the world *is* such a humbug!" [1]

The only Pecksniffian hypocrite outside of Dickens is the Reverend Brocklehurst, whom Jane Eyre describes as lecturing to the half starved and shivering girls at the school of which he was trustee, on the beauty of asceticism and the holiness of economy, while his wife and daughters sit in state on the platform, curled, bejewelled, opulent in plumes and velvet.

The cant and manœuvering of the Thackeray and Trollope hypocrites are necessary as first aid to the ambitious. By means of them Becky Sharp achieves a husband, Mrs. Mackenzie a son-in-law, Moffit and Crosbie a patrician father-in-law, and Lady Carbury a literary reputation. Mr. Slope and the Pateroffs fail but no less bear up beneath their unsuccess. Melmotte, another Merdle,

[1] *My Novel*, 353.

succumbs, like him, forced to realize that deceit may strike one with a tragic rebound.

Jermyn and Grandcourt, the latter especially, indulge in deceit out of pure selfishness, but in neither of them does George Eliot consider hypocrisy a matter for even satirical mirth. In lighter vein she does indeed show up the *poseur* in low life. Mr. Dowlas, oracle of *The Rainbow*, laying down the law about ghosts, is too frightened by the apparition of Silas Marner to speak. Having recovered and feeling "that he had not been quite on a par with himself and the occasion," he intrigues to get appointed as deputy constable, and consents to serve, after "duly rehearsing a small ceremony known in high ecclesiastical life as *nolo episcopari*." Mr. Scales, discoursing largely on excommunication, is another caught in the Socratic trap by being asked for definition of the term. He is no less ready than Mr. Curdle, though more sententious: [1]

"Well, it's a law term—speaking in a figurative sort of way—meaning that a Radical was no gentleman."

It is George Eliot who sees the necessity of the mask that most are content simply to tear away or disfigure. Although she speaks through a worldly wise character, she sounds no note of dissent: [2]

"'I'll tell you what, Dan,' said Sir Hugo, 'a man who sets his face against every sort of humbug is simply a three-cornered

[1] *Felix Holt*. I, 152. Kingsley depicts the same thing in higher life, and takes it more seriously: Lancelot is contemptuous over the vicar,—"He told me, hearing me quote Schiller, to beware of the Germans, for they were all Pantheists at heart. I asked him whether he included Lange and Bunsen, and it appeared that he had never read a German book in his life. He then flew furiously at Mr. Carlyle, and I found that all he knew of him was from a certain review in the *Quarterly*." *Yeast*, 63.

[2] *Daniel Deronda*, II, 162.

impracticable fellow. There's a bad style of humbug, but there is also a good style—one that oils the wheels and makes progress possible.'"

This is recognized also by Lytton, who quotes "an anonymous writer of 1722:"[1]

"Deceit is the strong but subtile chain which runs through all the members of a society, and links them together; trick or be tricked, is the alternative; 'tis the way of the world, and without it intercourse would drop."

Trollope subscribes with qualification, by having the archdeacon say, on the death of Mrs. Proudie,—[2]

"The proverb of *De Mortuis* is founded on humbug. Humbug out of doors is necessary."

At the extreme opposite from the hypocrites, shrewd, knowing, wise at least in their own conceit, stand the incompetent, victims of folly; satirized not for ignorance but for bland unconsciousness of it, usually accompanied by a hallucination of efficiency. As the hypocrites shade off into villains, to be rebuked without humor, such as Jasper Losely, Randal Leslie, Bill Sykes, Sedgett, so the fools merge into the artless, to be smiled at without rebuke, as Colonel Digby and Colonel Newcome, Frank Hazeldean, the Vardens, Tom Pinch, Captain Cuttle, and "poor, excommunicated Miss Tox, who, if she were a fawner and a toad-eater, was at least an honest and a constant one."

It is Dickens again who contributes the most data to this study, and particularly to the genus, Silly Dame. Here his amusement over mere fatuous complacency becomes warmed into scorn when that stupidity affects the home

[1] *Maltravers*, 261.

[2] *Last Chronicles*, I, 300.

she has in charge, and lowers into a failure the very thing that it is most important to raise into success,—such success not being automatic. Mrs. Nickleby, Mrs. Wilfer, Mrs. Finching, like Jane Austen's Mrs. Bennet and Mrs. Palmer, and Susan Ferrier's Lady Juliana Douglass, are comparatively harmless, and are indulged accordingly. But an incapacity that may be picturesque in easy circumstances deepens into a grave misdemeanor when joined to a small income. Mrs. Micawber, Mrs. Pocket, Mrs. Pardiggle, and especially Mrs. Jellyby are domestic pests, at whom we are more exasperated than amused.

Aside from Dickens, the only artist much interested in this stratum of human nature is the one who has given us Mrs. Tulliver and Mrs. Vincy and her daughter, but they are not real sources of trouble, except Rosamund, and her failure is more spiritual than material. Mrs. Tulliver, a plaintive, hopelessly literal soul, is distressed over her husband's metaphoric speech about "a good wagoner with a mole on his face." She resents feebly the dogmatizing of the majestic Mrs. Glegg, but would never go "to the length of quarreling with her any more than a water-fowl that puts out its leg in a deprecating manner can be said to quarrel with a boy who throws stones." Under another metaphor she is an amiable fish, which, "after running her head against the same resisting medium for thirteen years, would go at it again to-day with undiluted alacrity." [1]

Out of her saddening experience Rosamund did emerge somewhat wiser, but with none of the higher wisdom which constitutes character.

"She simply continued to be mild in her temper, inflexible in her judgment, disposed to admonish her husband, and also to frustrate him by stratagem." [2]

[1] *Mill on the Floss*, III, 113.

[2] *Middlemarch*, III, 460.

The other section of this class most fully recruited is made up of the foolish young men. It might look as though in the novelist's world masculine folly were a malady incident to youth, while on the other hand, the feminine sort appeared late. For it happens that Lydia and Kitty Bennet have no real successors. There are indeed plenty of Hetty Sorrels, Lucy Deanes, Rosa Mackenzies, Amelia Sedleys, Dahlia Flemings; but their innocence and pathos protect them from satire. And the merely vapid and vain school girl is apparently too worthless a figure to be given a place on Victorian pages. So also seems the man whose mental growth has not kept pace with the years. Mr. Micawber may be taken as the exception that proves the rule. Sir Lukin Dunstane likewise shows that one may reach man's estate and flourish therein on a small allotment of intelligence. He makes his best record in a gossipy little conversation with his wife, to whom he is giving an account of the Dacier-Asper wedding. Emmy had commented on the eloquence of his report: [1]

"He murmured something in praise of the institution of marriage—when celebrated impressively, it seemed.

"'Tony calls the social world the "theater of appetites," as we have it at present,' she said; 'and the world at a wedding is, one may reckon, in the second act in the hungry tragi-comedy.'

"'Yes, there's the breakfast,' Sir Lukin assented. Mrs. Fryar-Gunnett was much more intelligible to him; in fact, quite so, as to her speech."

Folly is more ludicrous in the young man than in the maid, on account of his greater conspicuousness in affairs, and the greater things expected of him,—any failure divulging the discrepancy between fact and fancy which is the basis of humor. It is also true that he stands

[1] *Diana of the Crossways*, 407.

a better chance of having his foolishness shaken out of him in his more exposed and strenuous life. Both these conditions are implied in a reflection made by one of Trollope's characters. Isabel Boncassen, the frank American beauty, looks upon the young man as a type: [1]

"Young men are pretty much the same everywhere, I guess. They never have their wits about them. They never mean what they say, because they don't understand the use of words. They are generally half impudent and half timid. When in love they do not at all understand what has befallen them. What they want they try to compass as a cow does when it stands stretching out its head toward a stack of hay which it cannot reach. Indeed, there is no such thing as a young man, for a man is not really a man till he is middle-aged. But take them at their worst, they are a deal too good for us, for they become men some day, whereas we must only be women to the end."

Dickens is again a contributor of portraits, though not of the best, and is joined this time by Thackeray, Trollope, and Meredith.

Tom Gradgrind, product of a system, and Edmund Sparkler, product of a lack of system, deserve mention, as does Edward Dorrit, though sketched without color. Rawdon Crawley and Joseph Sedley, no longer in first flush of youth, are consistent exponents of gullible good nature and ponderous vacuity. But the two prizes of undeviating stupidity are Sir Felix Carbury and Algernon Blancove.

Sir Felix is a spoiled darling and an excrescence on the face of the earth. His accomplishments are set forth in a description of his state of enforced solitude consequent upon his latest exhibition of monumental inefficiency: [2]

[1] *The Duke's Children*, II, 64.
[2] *The Way We Live Now*, II, 104.

"He had so spent his life hitherto that he did not know how to get through a day in which no excitement was provided for him. He never read. Thinking was altogether beyond him. And he had never done a day's work in his life. He could lie in bed. He could eat and drink. He could smoke and sit idle. He could play cards; and could amuse himself with women,—the lower the culture of the women, the better the amusement. Beyond these things the world had nothing for him."

The complacent fool would be matter for pure mirth if he could live for himself alone; but unfortunately his worthless existence is as adequate as any for the promotion of disaster to others. Sir Felix is comparatively harmless, for his wreckage is reparable, but Algernon is made a *deus ex machina*, and lets his commission go by default. Those who trusted him learn that "He that sendeth a message by the hand of a fool cutteth off his own feet, and drinketh in damage." Or, as his own author says: [1]

"But, if it is permitted to the fool to create entanglements and set calamity in motion, to arrest its course is the last thing the Gods allow of his doing."

He is, however, a fool of quality in that he has a philosophy of life, and if he were pent up in his room, he could mitigate tedium by reverie. One may indulge in anticipations without possessing the faculty of foresight. His cousin "aspired to become Attorney-General of these realms," but he had other views: [2]

"Civilization had tried him and found him wanting; so he condemned it. Moreover, sitting now all day at a desk, he was civilization's drudge. No wonder, then, that his dream was of prairies, and primeval forests, and Australian wilds. He believed in his heart that he would be a man new made over there,

[1] *Rhoda Fleming*, 372. [2] *Ibid.*, 46.

and always looked forward to a savage life as to a bath that would cleanse him, so that it did not much matter his being unclean for the present."

The present sorry scheme of things also suffers him to wander the streets in temporary bankruptcy: [1]

"He continued strolling on, comparing the cramped misty London aspect of things with his visionary free dream of the glorious prairies, where his other life was : the forests, the mountains, the endless expanses; the horses, the flocks, the slipshod ease of language and attire; and the grog-shops. Aha! There could be no mistake about him as a gentleman and a scholar out there! Nor would Nature shut up her pocket and demand innumerable things of him, as civilization did. This he thought in the vengefulness of his outraged mind."

Meredith keeps on the trail of this luckless youth with something of the relentlessness with which Blifil, Reverend Collins, Mrs. Norris, and Mrs. Proudie are pursued; but he gives a good Meredithian reason for it. Twice he takes the trouble to explain him, both times on the grounds of realism: [2]

"So long as the fool has his being in the world, he will be a part of every history, nor can I keep him from his place in a narrative that is made to revolve more or less upon its own wheels. * * * for the fool is, after his fashion, prudent, and will never, if he can help it, do himself thorough damage, that he may learn by it and be wiser."

Again, an incident is followed by comment. Algernon, being loggy after a dinner at the Club, fancies himself melancholy and profound: [3]

"'I must forget myself. I'm under some doom. I see it now. Nobody cares for me. I don't know what happiness is. I was

[1] *Rhoda Fleming*, 108. [2] *Ibid.*, 307. [3] *Ibid.*, 337.

born under a bad star. My fate's written.' Following his youthful wisdom, this wounded hart dragged his slow limbs toward the halls of brandy and song.

"One learns to have compassion for fools, by studying them: and the fool, though Nature is wise, is next door to Nature. He is naked in his simplicity; he can tell us much, and suggest more. My excuse for dwelling upon him is, that he holds the link of my story. Where fools are numerous, one of them must be prominent now and then in a veracious narration."

According to the old duality of satirized objects,—Vice and Folly, identified with the deceiver and the deceived,—the two classes just discussed would exhaust the list. But these signify folly in its narrowest and most literal sense, a plain lack of brains and a general incapacity. In its wider sense it includes misuse as well as want of intelligence. These mortals, as Puck discovered, are indeed all fools, at times and on certain points. The number may not be infinite, but Lydgate discovered sixty-three kinds; and Barclay augmented the list to nearly one hundred. Perfect wisdom would cast out not only ignorance, but also frivolity, sentimentality, vanity, all sorts of false standards and all manner of fallacies. Therefore snobs, romanticists, egoists, fanatics, merely exemplify folly in its varieties and ramifications.

The snob is defined by his great expositor as "one who meanly admires mean things." A modern scholar calls vulgarity "satisfaction with anything inferior when a superior is attainable." [1] These definitions together indicate why snobbishness and vulgarity are allied, though not identical. There is, however, this difference, that sat-

[1] Dr. David Starr Jordan. As to Thackeray, the analysis made by Trollope is very much to the point,—that he mustered all his dislikes and animosities under that caption. See the Biography, 82.

isfaction implies in itself a passive acquiescence, whereas admiration leads naturally to imitation, and if possible, appropriation, of the thing approved. Of course, satisfaction on a different plane results from a feeling of attainment and possession; but it then becomes pride or vanity, which in turn may or may not be of the snobbish sort.

In popular apprehension, indeed, snobbishness and vulgarity are rated as more opposite than allied. The snob is thought of as either belonging to the polite world or trying to secure an entrance to its polished circles. If he occupies the former position, he boasts of his refinement, and from his eminence contemplates with scorn or at best an affable condescension, the mob below. To this class belong such members as Lytton's and Disraeli's aristocrats; such diverse types in Dickens as Sir John Chester, the Monseigneur in *Tale of Two Cities*, Mrs. General, and Mrs. Gowan; Thackeray's Marquis of Steyne, Major Pendennis, and the Misses Pinkerton; Trollope's de Courcys and the Chaldicote circle; Meredith's Everard Romfrey and Ferdinand Laxley.

But if the snob is engaged in climbing up instead of looking down, he is likely to have some common clay still clinging to his shoes, as well as to be dishevelled by the exertions of the ascent. Such insignia of vulgarity are worn by a numerous clan, including the politician Rigby, the money-lender Baron Levy; [1] the Veneerings and Dorrits, and those patriotic American snobs whom Martin Chuz-

[1] This character makes a shrewd comment, which indicts English society for being a promoter of snobbishness: "They call me a *parvenu*, and borrow my money. They call our friend the wit, a *parvenu*, and submit to all his insolence * * * provided they can but get him to dinner. They call the best debater in the Parliament of England a *parvenu*, and will entreat him, some day or other, to be prime minister, and ask him for stars and garters. A droll world, and no wonder the *parvenus* want to upset it." *My Novel*, II, 130.

zlewit found so insufferably vulgar; Barry Lyndon, Mr. Osborne, and Becky Sharp; Mr. Slope, Mr. Crosbie, and the great Melmotte.

On the other hand, the frankly vulgar is reckoned among the plebeians. As there is a snobbishness free from coarseness, so there is a vulgarity unembellished even by pseudo-culture. In this ugly and gross scum of the earth no novelist really delights except the creator of Mrs. Gamp, Quilp, Squeers, and Fagin and his crew, though Thackeray is able to depict Sir Pitt Crawley; Trollope, the Scathards; and Meredith, Sedgett.

The compound of snobbishness and vulgarity has the additional complexity of ramifying into hypocrisy on one side and sentimentality on the other. The first conjunction is made because of the incitement to that fawning, flattering servility that more than anything else rouses satiric disgust. The second occurs when the flattering unction is laid to one's own soul instead of being paid to the possessions of others. The first is obvious and its examples are legion. The second is more subtle and obscure, though perhaps almost as prevalent. It consists in an inaccurate orientation, a supposition that one has arrived at a goal, when the case is otherwise. Such unwarranted complacency cheers the lot of Mrs. Kirkpatrick, Mrs. Hobson Newcome, Mrs. Proudie, and the Countess de Saldar.

This, however, is only one phase of sentimentality. It also may exist independently, or otherwise combined than with snobbishness or vulgarity. It is a term somewhat ambiguous because of a recently changed connotation.

In the eighteenth century it was "sensibility," and regarded as a virtue until Jane Austen exhibited it in Mari-

anne Dashwood and her mother. At that time it was thought of as excess of feeling or sentiment cherished for its own sake, without much regard for the worthiness of its object. Marianne, disappointed in the vanished romance she had built up chiefly from imaginative material, "would have thought herself very inexcusable had she been able to sleep at all the first night after parting from Willoughby. She would have been ashamed to look her family in the face the next morning, had she not risen from her bed in more need of repose than when she lay down in it." [1]

If Meredith, three-quarters of a century later, had been relating the sad fortunes of a self-deceived young lady, he would have stressed in his account of her character, the cause of the trouble, that is, the process of constructing a Spanish castle with a flimsy foundation in fact, rather than the effect, namely, the emotional orgy which celebrated its inevitable but astonishing collapse. He would have seen that preliminary process as possible because of the disregard for facts which is the real mark of the sentimentalist.[2] This later interpretation is not a contradiction of the earlier one, but a shifting of emphasis. The common factor in the two definitions is feeling, ranging all the way from

[1] *Sense and Sensibility*, II, 85.

[2] This conception of sentimentality has many illustrations, expressed and implied. Chesterton describes the sentimentalist as "the man who wants to eat his cake and have it," who "has no sense of honour about ideas," and who keeps a quarreling "intellectual harem." Crotch, in his *Pageantry of Dickens*, remarks that the English "prefer a plaster of platitudes to the x-rays of investigation." Meredith in his *Up to Midnight*, observes that liberty is one of the phrases we suck like sweetmeats, and adds, "We read the newspapers daily, and yet we surround ourselves with a description of scenic extravaganza conjured up to displace uncomfortable facts. The image of it is the Florentine Garden established in the midst of the Plague."

See also Butler's *Notebooks*, Anatole France's essay on Dumas, and Bailey's biography of Meredith.

simple preference or inclination to strong emotion. But whereas formerly this element was accepted without further analysis, it came later to be accounted for in its relation to the intellect. Emotion is an excellent driver but an untrustworthy leader. It is when it assumes leadership, when action is not only impelled but guided by feeling, that the ensuing motion is in danger of being erratic, unprogressive, perhaps calamitous. This more or less wilful blindness, which is the essence of sentimentality, is of course a very natural human trait. Since it is the function of emotion to supply heat, and of intellect to furnish light, and since warmth is as a rule more grateful than illumination, particularly if the prospect does not please, we are much more likely to be warmed in our passage through life than illumined. To refuse to see the disagreeable is as instinctive as to seek the delightful. Nor could one be regarded as more of a fault than the other until the love of truth for its own sake became an ideal, accompanying the dominance of the scientific spirit.

This accounts for the fact that, while Meredith did not invent the sentimentalist any more than Dickens the hypocrite or Thackeray the snob, he is the first to take a deep and conscious interest in this species; being especially fitted for it by his own incisive, highly rationalized nature as well as by the spirit of his time. His predecessors in this field are Peacock, Gaskell, Dickens, Thackeray, and Eliot, although the last is rather a contemporary.

From Squire Headlong, the would-be savant, to Mr. Falconer, the would-be Platonist and devotee of Saint Cecilia, Peacock traces a vein of rather innocuous sentimentality, but of Miss Damaretta Pinmoney he gives a definite account, followed by several examples: [1]

[1] *Melincourt*, 23.

"She had cultivated a great deal of theoretical romance—in taste, not in feeling—an important distinction—which enabled her to be most liberally sentimental in words, without at all influencing her actions."

Mrs. Shaw represents those who so appreciate the value of romantic affliction that, lacking a grief, they manufacture a grievance to cover the deficiencies of a too roseate existence. On a certain melancholy occasion to be sure she orders "those extra delicacies of the season which are always supposed to be efficacious against immoderate grief at farewell dinners." But her usual manner— [1]

"* * * had always something plaintive in it, arising from the long habit of considering herself a victim to an uncongenial marriage. Now that, the General being gone, she had every good of life, with as few drawbacks as possible, she had been rather perplexed to find an anxiety, if not a sorrow. She had, however, of late settled upon her own health as a source of apprehension; she had a nervous little cough whenever she thought about it; and some complaisant doctor ordered her just what she desired,—a winter in Italy."

It is Mrs. Kirkpatrick, however, who takes the prize in "pink sentimentalism," and holds it until the arrival of the Countess de Saldar, and the Pole sisters. Behind the "sweet perpetuity of her smile" is carried on an equally perpetual manœvering, which ministers, under the auspices of refinement and the proprieties, to a small and selfish tyranny. If by any chance she is detected or foiled, she is deeply wounded, for if she hates anything, "it is the slightest concealment and reserve." Moreover, she never

[1] *North and South*, 9. Cf. Kingsley's crude and literal handling of the same theme. Anna Maria Heale was always talking of her nerves, "though she had nerves only in the sense wherein a sirloin of beef has them." *Two Years Ago*, 85.

thinks of herself, and is "really the most forgiving person in the world, in forgiving slights." She is overcome by the spring weather,— [1]

"*Primavera*, I think the Italians call it. * * * It makes me sigh perpetually; but then I am so sensitive. Dear Lady Cumnor used to say I was like a thermometer."

But it is in her association with Lady Harriet that her sincerity and candor shine forth. Apprised, on one occasion, of the intention of that personage—an aristocrat in character as well as social station—to honor her with a morning call, she dispatches to a neighbor her stepdaughter Molly, of whose friendship with Lady Harriet she is jealous, and keeps at home her own daughter Cynthia, to prepare the especially delicious luncheon to which the guest is to be invited as an impromptu bit of pot-luck. During this visit Lady Harriet brings up the question of white lies, confessing to an occasional indulgence, and asking her hostess if she never yielded to the temptation. She is answered: [2]

"I should have been miserable if I ever had. I should have died of self-reproach. 'The truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth,' has always seemed to me such a fine passage. But then I have so much that is unbending in my nature."

Dickens and Thackeray, like Lytton, Reade, and Kingsley, have too much of this trait in their own temperaments

[1] *Wives and Daughters*, I, 394.

[2] *Ibid.*, I, 324. Mrs. Gaskell's art is shown in making Cynthia a foil to her mother. Like Dr. Gibson and Molly, she sees through that lady's transparent veiling, but unlike them, she is more frank than polite. Her distressingly literal interpretations of the subtle speeches to which the household is treated, affords a contrast that is lacking, for instance, in the duet of Mrs. Mackenzie and Rosey.

to be able to view it with complete detachment, but they present a few samples. Besides Mrs. Wititterly, Harold Skimpole, and the ever illustrative Mr. Dorrit, Dickens is most successful with Mr. and Mrs. Micawber, and Mrs. Chick.

When Mr. Micawber, stimulated by the prospect of something being about to turn up, presents poor Traddles, with great *éclat* and ceremony, his personal note for the exact amount of his indebtedness, David, a witness, reflects: [1]

"I am persuaded, not only that this was quite the same to Mr. Micawber as paying the money, but that Traddles himself hardly knew the difference until he had had time to think about it."

Mrs. Chick, with true Dombian genius, having helped to loosen her sister-in-law's slender hold upon life, now enjoys the pathos of the situation: [2]

"What a satisfaction it was to Mrs. Chick—a commonplace piece of folly enough, * * * to patronize and be tender to the memory of that lady; in exact pursuance of her conduct to her in her lifetime; and to thoroughly believe herself, and take herself in, and make herself uncommonly comfortable on the strength of her toleration! What a mighty pleasant virtue toleration should be when we are right, to be so very pleasant when we are wrong, and quite unable to demonstrate how we came to be invested with the privilege of exercising it!"

In her capricious cruelty to Lucretia Tox, she pretends to be scandalized at what she had fostered all along, and taunts the dismayed woman for the very thing she had been aiding and abetting: [3]

[1] *David Copperfield*, II, 102. [2] *Dombey and Son*, I, 57.
[3] *Ibid*, 464.

"'The scales;' here Mrs. Chick cast down an imaginary pair, such as are commonly used in grocers' shops; 'have fallen from my sight.' * * * 'How can I speak to you like that?' retorted Mrs. Chick, who, in default of having any particular argument to sustain herself upon, relied principally upon such repetitions for her most withering effects. 'Like that! You may well say like that, indeed!'"

Thackeray is included in this list chiefly on the strength of the Osbornes, Pitt Crawley, and to a less degree, Blanche Armory and Mrs. Bute. Of the first he says, regarding certain declarations of disinterested friendliness and admiration,—"There is little doubt that old Osborne believed all he said, and that the girls were quite in earnest in their protestations of affection for Miss Swartz." And his thrust at the hoodwinked Pitt's delighted apprehension that the clever Becky really understood and appreciated him, is a palpable hit. He also arraigns under this head his favorite satirical object,—"the moral world, that has, perhaps, no particular objection to vice, but an insuperable repugnance to hearing vice called by its proper name." On the other hand, more than any other novelist, he has given us sentimentalists unaware; that is, in such characters as Helen, Laura, and Arthur Pendennis, Lady Castlewood, and Colonel Newcome, he shares their own unawareness of the possession of this foible, though in all these it is of an innocent variety.

George Eliot is keenly alive to this blindness in human nature, particularly as it manifests itself in the pernicious optimism of weak and wilful youth; but as with other mortal failures, it is usually too serious in her eyes for satire. Of all her novels, *Felix Holt* and *Daniel Deronda* alone have no character of this type. In the others he appears as Arthur Donnithorne, Stephen Guest, Godfrey Cass, Tito

Melema, and Fred Vincy; but rarely is he ridiculed, and then ironically.

Of the bonny young Squire Donnithorne she draws the portrait as he himself would see it: [1]

"* * * candour was one of his favorite virtues; and how can a man's candour be seen in all its lustre unless he has a few failings to talk of? But he had an agreeable confidence that his faults were all of a generous kind—impetuous, warm-blooded, leonine; never crawling, crafty, reptilian. 'No! I'm a devil of a fellow for getting myself into a hobble, but I always take care the load shall fall on my own shoulders.' Unhappily there is no inherent poetic justice in hobbles, and they will sometimes obstinately refuse to inflict their worst consequences on the prime offender, in spite of his loudly-expressed wish. It was entirely owing to this deficiency in the scheme of things that Arthur had ever brought any one into trouble besides himself."

Even when troublesome consequences threatened both himself and others, he was buoyed up by "a sort of implicit confidence in him that he was really such a good fellow at bottom, Providence would not treat him harshly."

Tito Melema also leaned heavily on the law of compensation: [2]

"It was not difficult for him to smile pleadingly on those whom he had injured, and offer to do them much kindness: and no quickness of intellect could tell him exactly the taste of that honey on the lips of the injured."

[1] *Adam Bede*, I, 184.

[2] *Romola*, II, 469. Cf. *Two Years Ago*, for a sample of Kingsley's personally applied, Thackerayan sarcasm on a similar subject,—we young men, "blinded by our self-conceit," and so on.

Godfrey Cass, having little to say for himself, is drawn with much sympathy, the responsibility being thrown upon his self-excusing father: [1]

"The Squire's life was quite as idle as his sons', but it was a fiction kept up by himself and his contemporaries in Raveloe that youth was exclusively the period of folly, and that their aged wisdom was constantly in a state of endurance mitigated by sarcasm."

In addition to these instances, and such casual phrases as, "that softening influence of the fine arts which makes other peoples' hardships picturesque," and "that pleasure of guessing which active minds notoriously prefer to ready-made knowledge," George Eliot defines sentimentality indirectly in the words of Mary Garth, an observant young woman and something of a humorist in her own right: [2]

"* * * people were so ridiculous with their illusions, carrying their fools' caps unawares, thinking their own lies opaque while everybody elses' were transparent, making themselves exceptions to everything, as if when all the world looked yellow under a lamp they alone were rosy."

The sentimentalist is rampant in Meredith's novels, depicted in all his aspects. The keynote is that the sentimental spirit may be arbitrarily hospitable, not obliged to keep open house whither all truths may turn for shelter. "Bear in mind," he admonishes, "that we are sentimentalists. The eye is our servant, not our master; and so are

[1] *Silas Marner*, 84. Cf. Catherine Arrowpoint's interpretation of parental piety: "People can easily take the sacred word duty as a name for what they desire any one else to do." *Daniel Deronda*, I, 370.

[2] *Middlemarch*, II, 61. She also refused to marry Fred Vincy if he took orders, because she "could not love a man who is ridiculous." He would be so because of the entire absence of the clerical in his nature.

the senses generally. We are not bound to accept more than we choose from them." [1]

It is in *Sandra Belloni* that Meredith is most expository on the subject, and in connection with the Pole sisters. He says of them,— [2]

"It may be seen that they were sentimentalists. That is to say, they supposed that they enjoyed exclusive possession of the Nice Feelings, and exclusively comprehended the Fine Shades." They had "that extraordinary sense of superiority to mankind which was the crown of their complacent brows. Eclipsed as they may be in the gross appreciation of the world by other people, who excel in this or that accomplishment, persons that nourish Nice Feelings and are intimate with the Fine Shades carry their own test of intrinsic value."

Here, however, the sentimental fallacy is shown to be the reverse side of the refusal to see what is, and to consist in the assertion of what is not. This is a logical corollary, since merely to disregard the unpleasant is a passive state until reinforced by the active process of manufacturing the desirable. Actually to manufacture the desirable is a constructive work, and the occupation of the enterprising idealist. The sentimentalist manufactures only in fancy, and, being a sentimentalist, does not know the difference. His imagination, that marvelous power of visualizing the absent or non-existent, is perverted by being turned inward and forced to rest content with its hollow fabrication, instead of being directed outward upon a plastic world waiting its formative touch. As the urge

[1] *Sandra Belloni*, 220.

[2] *Ibid.*, 4. He enlarges on this result of an effete civilization, hinting that "our sentimentalists are a variety owing their existence to a certain prolonged term of comfortable feeding. The pig, it will be retorted, passes likewise through this training. He does. But in him it is not combined with an indigestion of high German romances."

to an ideal of excellence is the most hopeful quality of human nature, so the satisfied repose on the fictitious supposition of such excellence is the most hopeless. Being, as Meredith adds, "a perfectly natural growth of a fat soil," it lacks the stimulus of a rebuff that turns earth's smoothness rough, and perceives no necessity for striving or daring.

On this assertive side sentimentality is related to egoism. But the relation is difficult to express, for egoism is another complexity that baffles analysis. Self-respect and attention to one's own affairs are basic and indispensable virtues; while conversely, altruism is often but egoism in disguise and of all things the most sentimental. We may conclude, however, that it is egoism pushed to its two extremes, vanity on the one side and selfishness on the other, that is the satirizible sort. It is to the vanity wing that sentimentality is more closely connected, as the assumption it makes is usually that of our own superiority in possession and attainment, our own sincerity of motive, and our own immunity from ordinary consequences. Such is the attitude of the sentimental egoists, of which Meredith gives us a full complement.

The Countess de Saldar is abused by the exposure of her schemes, but resolute: [1]

> "Still to be sweet, still to smile and to amuse,—still to give her zealous attention to the business of the diplomatist's Election, still to go through her church service devoutly, required heroism; she was equal to it, for she had remarkable courage; but it was hard to feel no longer at one with Providence."

Wilfred Pole, by Wilming Weir in the moonlight, vows his love for Emilia: [2]

[1] *Evan Harrington*, 349.

[2] *Sandra Belloni*, 152.

"Having said it, he was screwed up to feel it as nearly as possible, such virtue is there in uttered words."

Edward Blancove is visited by the facile compunction that attacks Arthur Donnithorne and others of the kind: [1]

"He closed, as it were, a black volume, and opened a new and bright one. Young men easily fancy that they may do this, and that when the black volume is shut the tide is stopped. Saying 'I was a fool,' they believe they have put an end to the foolishness."

Outside of Eliot and Meredith, the best examples of the youthful sentimental egoist are Thackeray's George Osborne, and Trollope's Crosbie. The latter argues himself into a state of innocence over his desertion of Lily Dale by soliloquizing that he did not deserve her, could not make her happy, and was bound to tell the truth, which, however painful, was always best.[2]

A word might be vouchsafed for this trait in low life, usually brushed lightly by the novelist. Dale of Allington is a great man in the market town, "laying down the law as to barley and oxen among men who usually knew more about barley and oxen than he did." Squire Cass, a person of some importance, "had a tenant or two, who complained of the game to him quite as if he had been a lord." Craig looks to Mrs. Poyser "like a cock as thinks the sun's rose o' purpose to hear him crow." [3] And Robert

[1] *Rhoda Fleming*, 149. Cf. Victor Radnor, who "intended impressing himself upon the world as a factory of ideas." Also Sir Willoughby, who can account for Lætitia's refusal of him only by the reflection,—"There's a madness comes over women at times, I know."

[2] He also visualizes himself as a Don Juan, Lothario, Lovelace, and thinks, "Why should not he be a curled darling as well as another?" He is consequently hurt and astonished when, after the event, his disarming confession, "I know I've behaved badly," was met by the unsympathetic agreement, "Well, yes, I'm afraid you have."

[3] Cf. the whole *motif* of Rostand's *Chanticler*.

Armstrong says of Master Gammon,—"There's nothing to do, which is his busiest occupation, when he's not interrupted at it."

Then there are the unsentimental egoists, attached to the selfish and domineering wing of egoism. They are less amenable to satire, being less deceptive by nature, and more prone to tyranny and cruelty, thereby deserving rebuke without humor. This class is represented by Paul Dombey, Barnes Newcome, Tom Tulliver, and others from the author of the last. This is another favorite type with Eliot, the self-willed sharing honors with the self-indulgent. Grandcourt "meant to be master of a woman who would have liked to master him, and who perhaps would have been capable of mastering another man." Tito Melema "felt that Romola was a more unforgiving woman than he had imagined; her love was not that sweet, clinging instinct, stronger than all judgments, which, he began to see now, made the great charm of a wife." Harold Transome, who "had a padded yoke ready for the neck of every man, woman, and child that depended on him," makes the alarming discovery about Esther that a lightning "shot out of her now and then, which seemed the sign of a dangerous judgment; as if she inwardly saw something more admirable than Harold Transome. Now, to be perfectly charming, a woman should not see this." Meredith portrays this irresponsible selfishness in Roy Richmond, Lord Ormont, and Lord Fleetwood; and defines it in Sir Austin's *Pilgrim's Scrip*, which says that sentimentalists "are they who seek to enjoy without incurring the Immense Debtorship for a thing done." [1]

[1] Sentimentalism is further described as "a happy pastime and an important science to the timid, the idle, and the heartless; but a damning one to them who have anything to forfeit." *Richard Feverel*, 220.

Another and more passive type of the egoist is the epicurean. He asks only to have his tastes gratified, and, being devoted to material comfort, demands little of the world but material supplies. Epicurianism is marked by an indulgent good-humor so long as it is itself indulged, and when not gratified sinks into nothing worse than peevishness. Though it may be a deplorable trait, it is not a ridiculous one in itself, and is therefore satirized only when in conjunction with something that produces an incongruity. The constant stream of satire directed against the epicurean clergy, for instance, is due to the sense of an incompatibility between a profession which inculcates simplicity at least, if not actual asceticism, and a régime of sensuous indulgence. Those who are legitimately worldly, as for example the patrician triad depicted by Thackeray,—Miss Crawley, the Countess of Kew, and Madam Bernstein,—may not be admirable, but neither are they absurd.

In Adrian Harley we have the egoistic epicure in all his plump perfection. Meredith hastens, however, to exculpate the founder of the hedonistic philosophy: [1]

"Adrian was an epicurean; one whom Epicurus would have scourged out of his garden, certainly; an epicurean of our modern notions."

The combination in him of cynic, self-pamperer, and Sir Oracle forms a type which Meredith especially delights to dishonor, because its own smugness puts a splash of

[1] In an access of particularly malicious realism, Meredith calls attention to a region that was already "a trifle prominent in the person of the wise youth, and carried, as it were, the flag of his philosophical tenets in front of him." He is also described as having "an instinct for the majority, and, as the world invariably found him enlisted in its ranks, his appellation of wise youth was acquiesced in without irony." Again,—"discreetness, therefore, was instructed to reign at the Abbey. Under Adrian's able tuition the fairest of its domestics acquired that virtue."

color, as it were, on the bull's-eye and renders it more conspicuous. Not only is the epicure pierced with many an ironic shaft, but the Wise Youth is made the veritable error incarnate of the Feverel tragedy. For it was his Fabian policy, dictated and obeyed, that knotted still more the sad tangle, just as it was Austin Wentworth's simple manly directness that proved the knot could be cut easily by prompt and silent action. Indeed, in these two characters we see exemplified throughout the story the false Florimell of vanity and the true Florimell of pride,—the pride that is too proud to do an unworthy or debasing deed, and the vanity that can counterfeit successfully until confronted by the genuine reality.

Egoism within bounds is a perfectly sane and rational thing, but to keep it within bounds is exceedingly difficult. When given over to an irrational rule it grows into fanaticism. For the fanatic owes his monomania to the force of a strong personality, which engenders the unmitigated assurance of being right, plus the perverted reasoning that characterizes the sentimentalist. He is always foolish, but seldom a hypocrite, as his deception usually extends to himself. His selfishness is of the opposite sort from the epicure's. What he seeks is not a soft berth and personal acquisitions, but a chance to impose his opinions on a misguided world, and to dominate over converts or subjects. In his milder moods he only dreams of happy schemes and far-reaching reforms, but when charged with energy his proselyting zeal tends to make him tyrannical.

In some form or other he appears on the pages of almost every Victorian novelist. That the faddist is a favorite subject with Peacock is well known. Lytton gives a delightful contribution in the Uncle Jack of *The Caxtons*, whose "bewitching enthusiasm and convincing calcula-

tion" led him into alluring speculations that invariably proved disastrous to the members of his family. Not financial but missionary and philanthropic zeal animate the souls immortalized by Dickens,—Mrs. Jellyby and Mrs. Pardiggle, Reverend Honeythunder, and the Snagsbys. Brontë and Kingsley specialize in the religious bigot. The former satirizes the Jesuit in *Villette*, but not St. John Rivers, who is drawn seriously. The latter gives a vivid picture in his Mrs. Locke and the Calvinistic preachers, and another, of the opposite type, done with more partisanship and less sympathy, in the vicar and Argemone in *Yeast*. Trollope is more interested in the sociological zealot. He introduces him as the author, Mr. Popular Sentiment; the "Barchester Brutus," Mr. John Bold; the demagogue, Ontario Moggs, son of a capitalist, and advocate of labor unions; and some characters in the Parliamentary Series. A sample from a harangue of Moggs will serve to illustrate the fair-mindedness that accompanies Trollope's love of parody. He quotes and then comments: [1]

"'Gentlemen, were it not for strikes, this would be a country in which no free man could live. By the aid of strikes we will make it the Paradise of the labourer, and Elysium of industry, an Eden of artisans.' There was much more of it, but the reader might be fatigued were the full flood of Mr. Moggs's oratory to be let loose upon him. And through it all there was a germ of truth, and a strong dash of true, noble feeling; but the speaker had omitted as yet to learn how much thought must be given to a germ of truth before it can be made to pro-

[1] *Ralph the Heir*, 81. He dissects him a little further,—"How far the real philanthropy of the man may have been marred by an uneasy and fatuous ambition; how far he was carried away by a feeling that it was better to make speeches at the Cheshire Cheese than to apply for payment of money due to his father, it would be very hard for us to decide."

duce fruit for the multitude. And then, in speaking, grand words come so easily, while thoughts—even little thoughts—flow so slowly!"

Mrs. Proudie herself is above all a politician, and justifies her existence by turning her religious bigotry into the channel of ecclesiastical polity, a procedure that well might cause the gentle bishop to quake: [1]

"When Mrs. Proudie began to talk about the souls of the people he always shook in his shoes. She had an eloquent way of raising her voice over the word souls that was qualified to make any ordinary man shake in his shoes."

She rejoices in an opportunity to condone with a member of the Clerical Opposition over a disappointment she has done her best to bring upon it: [2]

"'For, after all, Mrs. Arabin, what are the things of this world?—dust beneath our feet, ashes between our teeth, grass cut for the oven, vanity, vexation, and nothing more!'—well pleased with which variety of Christian metaphors, Mrs. Proudie walked on, still muttering, however, something about worms and grubs, by which she intended to signify her own species and the Dumbello and Grantly sects of it in particular."

George Eliot's zealots,—Dinah Morris, Savonarola, Felix Holt, Daniel Deronda, are not ridiculed, except for some sarcastic repartee put into the mouths of Mrs. Poyser and Esther Lyon. Nor is the pseudo-scholar Casaubon, though he is described as having a soul that "went on fluttering in the swampy ground where it was hatched, thinking of its wings and never flying," and on a certain occasion, as slipping "again into the library, to chew a cud of erudite mistake about Cush and Mizraim."

[1] *Last Chronicles of Barset*, I, 108. [2] *Ibid.*, 449.

Of all fanatics, those who are obsessed by an educational theory are perhaps the most dangerous, as they impose their systems on flexible youth, the result being often an orchard of lamentably bent twigs. Two exponents of opposite divisions of this type are Gradgrind, who aimed at the elimination of the imagination, and Feverel, who proposed to circumvent the element of original sin in human composition, by the policy of watchful waiting and absolute dictation. Both come to grief through the failure of facts to support their philosophies; but Dickens in his optimism makes Gradgrind a wiser man through being a sadder, while Meredith in his realism keeps Feverel blandly unconscious and untaught by a lesson that would have pierced any heart protected by a less impervious pericardium.

All the materials that go into the warp and woof of human nature are thus seen to be so commingled and interwoven that even the degree of separation necessary for examination is almost impossible. And when this dissection is after a fashion accomplished, it is the less useful, in that the same strand is discovered to change its color and texture from one section to another. Deception is here a vice and there a virtue. Folly is here amusing and there horrifying. Egoism is here absorbent and there encroaching. There are sentimental epicures and unsentimental epicures and ascetic sentimentalists. There are vulgar snobs and refined snobs and a vulgarity that is not snobbish. All of these are criticizably absurd at times, and yet the same things may at others be admirable or pathetic or tragic. Frequently the sublime and the ridiculous advance on the one step that separates them, and merge their diverse identities.

A peculiarly good illustration of the qualified nature of

human traits, in view of which we are wise to discard nouns in favor of adjectives for identifying purposes, is furnished by Trollope's Lady Carbury. She is hypocritical in her wire-pulling intrigues, but not a hypocrite, for her pretenses are not utterly hollow; her sincerity is about on the average level, and her industry much above it. She is sentimentally foolish in her maternal devotion to a son who has no possible claim on toleration, much less on a patient and sacrificing indulgence, but not a fool, for her cleverness is indisputable. She is as tyrannic to her daughter as lenient to her son, but not a selfish egoist, for she refuses to take advantage of Mr. Broune's offer of marriage, especially tempting to her harassed soul, on the altruistic grounds that she and her family would be more of a burden than a comfort to Mr. Broune. She is not a vulgar snob, but her respect for aristocratic connections is not always marked by refinement of method in her pursuit of them. Much of all this is unconsciously betrayed in the series of three letters to editors and critics, bespeaking their good offices for her new book, *Criminal Queens*. The epistles are tactfully adjusted to their respective recipients. To Mr. Broune, of *The Morning Breakfast Table*, she is intimately confiding and begs frankly for a lift, while pointing out the attractive features of her volume: [1]

"The sketch of Semiramis is at any rate spirited, though I had to twist it about a little to bring her in guilty. Cleopatra,

[1] *The Way We Live Now*, 1–2. In this connection we are also informed that "She did not fall in love, she did not wilfully flirt, she did not commit herself; but she smiled and whispered, and made confidences and looked out of her own eyes into men's eyes as though there might be some mysterious bond between her and them—if only mysterious circumstances would permit it. But the end of it all was to induce some one to do something which would cause a publisher to give her good payment for indifferent writing, or an editor to be lenient when, upon the merits of the case, he should have been severe."

of course, I have taken from Shakespeare: what a wench she was! I could not quite make Julia a queen; but it was impossible to pass over so piquant a character. * * * Marie Antoinette I have not quite acquitted. It would be uninteresting,—perhaps untrue. I have accused her lovingly, and have kissed when I have scourged. I trust the British public will not be angry because I do not whitewash Caroline, especially as I go along with them altogether in abusing her husband."

To Mr. Booker, of *The Literary Chronicle*, she is gently menacing, reminding him that she has engaged to review his *New Tale of a Tub* for *The Morning Breakfast Table;* [1]

"Indeed, I am about it now, and am taking great pains with it. If there is anything you wish to have specially said as to your view of the Protestantism of the time, let me know. I should like you to say a word as to the accuracy of my historical details, which I know you can safely do."

To Mr. Alf, of *The Evening Pulpit*, of whom she has reason to be afraid, her candor assumes a more impersonal and business-like air. She alludes to a recent caustic criticism in the *Pulpit* of some poor poetic wretch who well deserved it:

"I have no patience with the pretensions of would-be poets who contrive by toadying and underground influences to get their volumes placed on every drawing-room table. * * * Is it not singular how some men contrive to obtain the reputation of popular authorship without adding a word to the literature of their country worthy of note? It is accomplished by unflagging assiduity in the system of puffing. To puff and to get one's self puffed have become different branches of a new

[1] This proves efficacious, since Mr. Booker, though "an Aristides among reviewers," cannot resist the bait of a favorable notice of his *Tale*, "even though written by the hand of a female literary charlatan, and he would have no compunction as to repaying the service by fulsome praise in *The Literary Chronicle*."

profession. Alas, me! I wish I might find a class open in which lessons could be taken by such a poor tyro as myself."

As for herself, she expects ruthless severity, but trusts that her work has some merits. In any case, no amount of editorial flagellating can discount her personal admiration for this particular editor. Truly, she is all things to all men,—a policy, however, for which she might claim a certain Scriptural precedent of high authority.

PART IV

CONCLUSIONS

CHAPTER I

RELATIONSHIPS

To call a man a satirist or a satirical writer is to say something about him, certainly. It is, however, a piece of information which can be nothing more than a curiosity of literature so long as it remains an isolated fact. Although we are for the time being interested in a group of novelists primarily as satirists, we cannot even understand them as such, much less come to any fuller comprehension, unless we also view the satirists as novelists, as artists, as human beings.

These relationships extend on the internal side, so to speak, into such matters as quantity, quality, and range; and on the external, into the larger realms of the two satiric factors—criticism and humor—and thence into the neighboring domains of pessimism and tragedy, comedy and wit, realism and romanticism, emotion and intellect, and idealism. In none of these things, of course, can we do more than indicate briefly the effect they may have upon satire, or satire upon them.

Those who have furnished the largest amount of satire,—proportionately, as it happens, both to their own total production, and to the satiric production of others,—are Peacock, Dickens, Butler, and Meredith. But when it comes to quality,—tested by subtlety of wit, self-command, justice as to objects, and moderation of amount,—the only one to remain on the preëminent list is Meredith.

At the other extreme we find the same overlapping as

to quantity and quality. The smallest satiric amounts come from Brontë, Reade, and Gaskell, but, while the first two are correspondingly inferior in quality, the last is promoted several degrees up the qualitative scale, by reason of her lack of flourish, and the deft sureness of her touch. The low place she leaves vacant belongs by desert to Kingsley, who, like Brontë and Reade, never learned to solve the satirist's problem,—to trifle without being trivial. Frivolity, to be sure, was never a besetting sin of the Victorians, but in their earnestness they were prone to the opposite fault, and are occasionally caught beating a big satiric drum when softer notes would be more effective. Neither are any on the entire list guilty of downright insincerity, but the less successful ones are sometimes betrayed by partisan zeal, acrimonious temper, or unsound judgment, into more or less injustice. This is true to some extent of Peacock, Dickens, and Thackeray, as well as of those just mentioned.

In range of interest Dickens easily leads, followed by Meredith and Trollope. From *Oliver Twist* to *Edwin Drood*, this satirist spreads his attacks over more ground, and lays about him in more different directions than does any one else. With the exception of the Church, no possible word of importance is omitted from his satiric lexicon. His tastes in the ridiculous are catholic, and scarcely a satirizible subject languishes under his neglect. The other writers are more or less specialists in their chosen fields.

As to the effect on the satiric product of a versatile mind, a prolific pen, or preoccupation with other affairs, no deduction seems possible. Lytton, Kingsley, and Butler were versatile and prolific both, to a degree. Thackeray and Trollope were prolific within a more limited range.

Those most exclusively novelists were Disraeli, Dickens, and Brontë, but those to produce the most novels were Trollope, Lytton, Dickens, and Meredith. Lytton and Disraeli had more outside interests and underwent more varieties of social and political experience than any of their successors, though Trollope and Kingsley had occupations and avocations outside those of literature.

All these internal relationships have some significance but much less than the external ones. They deal primarily with accomplishments, which have their value chiefly as emanating from character and so defining it, whereas the various elements of which character itself is composed are in the nature of vital statistics in the life spiritual. Of these elements those most closely related to satire are naturally its constituents, though they may exist independently of it. Although satire is a form of criticism, it does not follow that those writers who are most consistently satirical have the most widely or deeply critical attitude toward life in general. Such fundamental criticism branches out into two philosophies: the hopeless, or pessimistic, shading off into flippant cynicism or bitter misanthropy; and the hopeful, or unsentimentally optimistic, which is the basis of all dynamic idealism. For whithersoever the idealist may tend, he certainly cannot start from a point of uncritical satisfaction with things as they are. Locke may have made some errors regarding the human understanding, but he was eminently correct in identifying the stimulus to action, not with a vision of fulfilled desire, but with the sting that bids nor sit nor stand but go. We must be driven out before we can be led on, but the driving process once being inaugurated, we make it more dignified and endurable by conceiving a goal upon which our endeavors may be focussed.

To the philosophy of pessimism no Victorian novelist was addicted. The phase of it current in the period just preceding was met by a prolonged, skeptical, British chuckle, beginning with our first novelist, who represents, indeed, in his own history the reaction from pensive melancholy to humorous common sense. Peacock is speaking of being unhappy, and adds: [1]

"To have a reason for being so would be exceedingly commonplace: to be so without any is the province of genius: the art of being miserable for misery's sake, has been brought to great perfection in our days; and the ancient Odessey, which held forth a shining example of the endurance of real misfortune, will give place to a modern one, setting out a more instructive picture of querulous impatience under imaginary evils."

Lytton shared the fondness of Dickens and Thackeray for pathos, but none of them went further into the anatomy of melancholy than some such comment as,—"Dig but deep enough, and under all earth runs water, under all life runs grief." [2]

Thackeray muses on the theme of aspiration in a whimsically pensive vein. Between the questions and the exclamation of the following excerpt are several instances of disappointment, related in his jocular mock-sympathetic tone: [3]

"Succeeding? What is the great use of succeeding? Failing? Where is the great harm? * * * Psha! These things appear as naught—when Time passes—Time the consoler—Time the

[1] *Nightmare Abbey*, 78.

[2] *What Will He Do with It?* Preface to Chap. IV, Bk. VI.

[3] *Sketches and Travels:* in London, 268. Cf. Taine's comment that Thackeray "does as a novelist what Hobbes does as a philosopher. Almost everywhere, when he describes fine sentiments, he derives them from an ugly source." *Hist. of Eng. Lit.*, IV, 188.

anodyne—Time the grey calm satirist, whose sad smile seems to say, Look, O man, at the vanity of the objects you pursue, and of yourself who pursue them."

In the essay *Of Adversity* Bacon says,—"We see in needleworks and embroideries it is more pleasing to have a lively work upon a sad and solemn ground, than to have a dark and melancholy work upon a lightsome ground." In so far as this can be granted, and applied to the novel, it would explain why George Eliot is more pleasing than Thackeray, for that is just the difference between them. Athwart the brilliant background of Vanity Fair fall the sinister shadows of the sordid little Puppets of the Show,—"the bullies, the bucks, the knaves, the quacks, the yokels, the tinselled dancers, the poor old rouged tumblers, and the light-fingered folk operating on the pockets of the rest." Behind Hayslope, Raveloe, and Middlemarch, the Floss and the Arno, hangs the curtain of Destiny, somber with pain, drudgery, sin and its wages. Yet over it plays a light shed around the characters as they appear upon the stage. It shines from Mrs. Poyser's kitchen and Mr. Irwine's study, from the parlors of the sisters *née* Dodson and the Garth family, from Celia Chettam's nursery, the bar at the Rainbow, and the shops of Florence. Together these actors weave a pattern of mirth and amusement,—the incorrigible human defiance of the ache of life and the agony of death.

Dickens, (upon whose Hogarthian gloom Taine lays great stress), Reade, and Kingsley are as critical of society in the larger sense as Thackeray is in the smaller, and as Eliot and Trollope are of human nature. Meredith has no illusions about any of these things, and Butler comes nearer than any to an unqualified pessimism. But even

he does not attain it. They all escape through the avenue of satire, sometimes reinforced by action,—both being efficacious means of getting melancholia out of the system. Nowhere does Browning speak more as a Britisher than when he declares rage to be the right thing in the main, and acquiescence the vain and futile.

Pessimism, to be consistent, would express itself in terms of tragedy. Out of approximately one hundred Victorian novels of the realistic type,—for romantic tragedy cannot be taken as an index of the writer's philosophy,—less than ten per cent can be classified as tragic in outcome; and in none of these is the catastrophe inclusive, overwhelming, or a perversion of justice. Of these the largest proportion belongs to Eliot and Meredith, but *The Mill on the Floss* is the solitary complete tragedy. *Rhoda Fleming* and *Middlemarch* are almost as truly tales of comic tragedians as *Romola*, *Richard Feverel*, and *An Amazing Marriage* are of tragic comedians. On the other hand, tragedy of this mitigated sort is not inconsistent with idealism, which in turn is the constructive side of criticism. While it is too much, as Lytton reminds us in *Kenelm Chillingly*, to expect both critical and constructive ability to be conspicuous in the same individual, nevertheless the criticism which is content to note a deflection from an ideal without even a tacit recognition of the ideal deflected from, is mere childish fretting over the personally irritating. Of this there is little in the nineteenth century. The Victorians may have had some of the unpardonable disregard for reality of which they have been accused,[1] but they never could be accused of a disregard for ideality. None of the novelists,

[1] "Of this national disease, this indifference to reality, the main bulk of nineteenth century English fiction has died already or must soon be dead." Gosse: *Eng. Lit. in the Nineteenth Cent.* 221.

indeed, announced an ecstatic premonition of some far-off, divine event toward which the whole creation moves; but they would all have asserted, even if under their breath, —*Eppur si muove*. This assertion is none the less emphatic and possibly the more artistic, by being made indirectly, through dramatic presentation of characters. Harley L'Estrange, Egremont, Mr. Hale, Mrs. Brandon, Mark Tapley, Sidney Carton, Mr. Eden, Jane Eyre, Alton Locke, Mr. Harding, Dinah Morris, Dorothea Brooke, Austin Feverel, Vittoria, Beauchamp,—these all testify in their various ways, by noble aspiration, generous self-effacement, sensitive response to duty, devotion to principle, courage in daring and in endurance, to the existence of a something in the human soul that is stemming the tide of its selfishness, cowardice, and cruelty, and may in time work out a salvation for the race.

A recognition of ideality does not imply, however, a lack of proper concern for reality, or the reverse. To make the two diametrical opposites is to confuse issues. As Meredith says,—"Between realism and idealism there is no natural conflict. This completes that." He adds the caution that only the great can be truly idealistic, and concludes,—"One may find as much amusement in a kaleidoscope as in a merely idealistic writer." [1] The direct counterpart to realism is romanticism; and the Victorians did not scruple to make free use of this alliance with the improbable, whenever the actual would fail to secure the desired dramatic effect. Coincidences abound,—convenient returns of the absent and departures of the troublesome, discoveries of kinship and inheritance of fortunes, narrow escapes and astonishing reunions. Yet there is also some conscious defense of the practice. Lytton has one of his

[1] *Letters*, I, 156.

characters, confessing her disappointment in the fiction of the time (the early thirties), conclude,— [1]

"These novelists make the last mistake you would suppose them guilty of, they have not enough *romance* in them to paint the truths of society. * * * By the way, how few know what natural romance is: so that you feel the ideas in a book or play are true and faithful to the characters they are ascribed to, why mind whether the incidents are probable?"

Trollope reinforces the idea: [2]

"No novel is worth anything, for the purpose either of tragedy or comedy, unless the reader can sympathise with the characters whose names he finds upon the pages. * * * If there be such truth, I do not know that a novel can be too sensational."

And Meredith expresses on at least two occasions his opinion of the value of realism. An embittered authoress determined to make her next novel a reflex of her bitterness. Considering that type, she— [3]

"* * * mused on their soundings and probings of poor humanity, which the world accepts as the very bottom-truth if their dredge brings up sheer refuse of the abominable. The world imagines those to be at our nature's depths who are impudent enough to expose its muddy shallows. * * * it may count on popularity, a great repute for penetration. It is true of its kind, though the dredging of nature is the miry form of art. When it flourishes we may be assured we have been over-enamelling the higher forms."

[1] *Godolphin*, 106–7. Cf. *Pelham*, 106 ff. for a long discussion of the novel.

[2] *Autobiography*, 206. But on another page he describes the sense of intimate reality he had of his beloved Barsetshire, and how vivid was the mental map he had made of it.

[3] *Diana of the Crossways*, 275.

In another volume he is describing the humorist's idea of it: [1]

"I conceive him to indicate that the realistic method of a conscientious transcription of all the visible, and a repetition of all the audible, is mainly accountable for our present branfulness, and for that prolongation of the vasty and the noisy, out of which, as from an undrained fen, steams the malady of sameness, our modern malady."

It might seem that a romanticism so prevalent and avowed would not be the best medium for satire, which is supposed to be realistic in the sense that it deals with the actual. But since satire is directed against persons rather than circumstances, it is in no danger so long as the romancing is confined to the situations, and the characters are kept to the plane of reality,—as is the case, with a few easily recognizable exceptions, in the Victorian novel. That the difficulty of truthfulness is one excuse for indulgence in the easier romantic method, is admitted by Eliot: [2]

"The pencil is conscious of a delightful facility in drawing a griffin—the longer the claws and the larger the wings, the better; but that marvellous facility which we mistook for genius is apt to forsake us when we want to draw a real, unexaggerated lion."

But in Victorian fiction neither griffins nor lions are in much evidence. The total personnel is fairly well symbolized (with the addition of a few more of the nobler brutes than are admitted by Thackeray) in the Overture to *The Newcomes*, wherein the "farrago of old fables" pictures a crow, a frog, an ox, a wolf, a fox, an owl, and a few lambs, but only the skin of a lion,—and that serving as cloak for a donkey. The romantico-realistic solution, therefore, forms probably the most satisfactory base for the

[1] *The Egoist*, 2. [2] *Adam Bede*, I, 268.

dissolving of the critical-humorous acid and the precipitation of satire. It secures a maximum of pungency with a minimum of flatness, and is perfectly safe to take.

As satire ramifies on the critical side into pessimism, tragedy, idealism, and the cognate matters of romanticism and realism, so it extends on the humorous into the comic, the witty, and the philosophic amusement known as a sense of humor.

Of those who launch their satire on the comic current, Dickens is again first. He is, as Taine remarks, the most railing and the most jocose of English authors. Speaking of his sportiveness, the French critic adds that "he is not the more happy for all that," and uses him to point the double moral: that "English wit consists in saying very jocular things in a solemn manner," and "The chief element of the English character is its want of happiness." [1] This last may account for the fact that none of the novelists is abreast of Dickens in fun-making. Indeed, the only others to deserve mention are Lytton, Trollope, and Thackeray, and the last in his extra-novel productions. Those, on the other hand, who are most endowed with wit are Meredith, Butler, and Peacock, with George Eliot not quite to be omitted. More important than comicality or wit is the sense of humor, for while they are largely in the nature of devices whereby the object is made *ex post facto* ludicrous to others, it is the quality which enables the critic himself to perceive the absurdity, and is thus the *sine qua non* of his being a satirist at all, It is Meredith who excels here, and this excellence, combined with his gift of wit and his restrained use of the comic, lifts him to a position of superiority on the humorous as well as the critical side. George Eliot also has the sense of proportion which

[1] *History of English Literature*, V, 140.

is the basis of humor, and so, to a less degree, have Trollope and Mrs. Gaskell. At the other extreme stand Reade, Kingsley, and Charlotte Brontë, with very little perspective or artistic detachment. The unfortunate thing about them is that they did not dare be as serious in expression as they were in temperament. Their humor does not bubble up from a natural spring but is manipulated through an artificial fountain, with varying effects of spontaneity. Lytton, Disraeli, and Thackeray had some youthful smartness of this sort to outgrow, and to a large extent they did it. But these others never did; and Reade especially has moments of a truculent pertness and shrill sarcasm that do an injustice to the really fine spirit of his work.

That there are more of these fitful gleams and partial visions than of an inclusive view of the cosmos, is not astonishing. The wide, clear outlook requires not only an infinite radius but a lens of powerful magnitude. To train a small telescope on a remote object achieves nothing. None of the novelists evinces the cosmic perspective that reports back in terms of a universe. That, indeed, is the function of the seer,—poet, prophet, or philosopher. But if only these see life in all its panoramic vastness, there are others who at least splash at a ten-league canvas, and insist on having real figures to draw from, whether saint or sinner. These have no use for the trivial and frivolous, yet they know better than to scorn the small and unpretentious. They delight in spaciousness, but are not enamored with mere bulk or nebulous vagueness. Such are our satiric novelists at their best, those among them ranking highest whose philosophical humor is greatest in proportion to their love of the comic, and who are granted sufficient wit to transmute their perception of the absurd into effective expression.

The value of a sense of humor lies largely in a certain duality about it, in that it springs from the intellectual side of one's nature and is reinforced by the emotional. It thus brings into play both of the supplementary factors, and in so doing tests them both. To have a sense of humor is an intellectual asset, but the enjoyment of it, which is inseparable from its possession, is an emotional state. This combination, as well as the order of procedure, affects the quality of the resulting satire. The best satirists are those most fully developed in head and heart, with the proviso that they keep the latter subordinate to the former, by making reason the final tribunal, and awarding the decision to intellectual judgment rather than emotional prejudice.

Among our novelists the greatest in other things is greatest in this also. The most generous endowment along both lines, and the nicest balance between them is Meredith's. With him are again associated Eliot and Butler. Nor is it by accident that we find the lowest extreme of the list still occupied by the same representatives. The test of course is one of control. It is not that Reade, Kingsley, and Charlotte Brontë are deficient in intellection. They do considerable thinking and sometimes reach conclusions that are rational and true. But when truth and rationality do dominate, it is by a happy good fortune rather than the inevitability that marks the ratiocination of a capable mind. This last cannot guarantee infallibility, to be sure, but the errors are reduced to a minimum, and moreover left open to correction. This is the case with Meredith, Eliot, and Butler, in whom a warm and sincere emotion is directed by the light of reason.

It might seem at first sight that Butler ran more to head than heart; but in this as in other things he was like Swift,

having the faculty of stating in cold logic what he had conceived in hot wrath. In such a temperament the feelings are more likely to be turned against those responsible for misery than toward the victims, thus producing a negative effect, with the positive side left to our inference. The only one whose work is entirely unemotional is Peacock, and even he waxes warm over the exploitation of the helpless, and the crimes committed in the name of Progress. Aside from this he shines with a hard mental brilliance,—which, be it said, does not insure soundness of viewpoint, as no one on the whole list can surpass him in prejudice and injustice.

George Eliot, admitted by all to have a better intellectual equipment than any of her predecessors, admired above others by Meredith because her fiction was "the fruit of a well-trained mind," herself says, "Our good depends on the quality and breadth of our emotion." [1] And again, "There is no escaping the fact that want of sympathy condemns us to a corresponding stupidity." [2] This realization that mental inertness itself is the result of callous or defective emotion, and that these two elements are not only inseparable but mutually dependent, is one secret of the fine quality of her satire. [3] It is the sheen on the surface of a deep current of sympathetic com-

[1] *Middlemarch*, II, 275. In this story also occurs the exquisite passage on the theme of the second citation above: "If we had a keen feeling and vision of all ordinary human life, it would be like seeing the grass grow and hearing the squirrel's heart beat, and we should die of that roar which lies on the other side of silence. As it is, the quickest of us walk about well wadded with stupidity."

[2] *Daniel Deronda*, III, 79.

[3] One of her biographers, G. W. Cooke, evidently holding to the old idea of satire, makes the opposite deduction, that "she is too much in sympathy with human nature to laugh at its follies and its weaknesses. * * * The foibles of the world she cannot treat in the vein of the satirist." Not if this vein be restricted to the Juvenalian and Popeian types, certainly.

prehension. Never does she forget or cease to commiserate the great predicament of the human race, condemned to make bricks without straw, under a hard taskmaster, with little prospect of reward to encourage perseverance or satisfy an outraged sense of justice. Yet she is able to apply a few satiric goads,—not to the taskmaster, for he directs from behind the veil and is not subject to human aspersions, nor to the weak or the blundering, but to the shirkers, the selfish, and those who demand more wage than a fair return for work done as well as possible under the circumstances.

In 1902 Meredith wrote to his daughter-in-law: [1]

"You have a liking for little phrases; I send you three:—Love is the renunciation of self. Passion is noble strength on fire. Fortitude is the one thing for which we may pray, because without it we are unable to bear the Truth."

Here we have in juxtaposition, quite unconsciously no doubt, his *obiter dicta* on emotion and intellect. In many places he had already dramatized them. His egoists—Sir Austin, Sir Willoughby, Wilfred Pole [2]—are satirized because they conceived love as self-assertion instead of renunciation; his epicures and snobs—Adrian Harley, Edward Blancove, Ferdinand Laxley—because their passion was neither noble nor truly strong; his sentimentalists of every description, because they neither realized that Truth is the highest thing a man may keep, nor, whether high or

[1] *Letters*, II, 535.

[2] A description of this youth concludes with a most significant epigram: "He was one of those who delight to dally with gentleness and faith, * * * but the mere suspicion of coquetry and indifference plunged him into a fury of jealous wrathfulness, and tossed so desirable an image of beauty before him that his mad thirst to embrace it seemed love. By our manner of loving we are known." *Vittoria*, 378.

not, would they purchase it at the price of a disturbance to their equanimity. They might pray for the truth to be pleasant, but never for fortitude to endure it if it were otherwise. The apparent pessimism underlying the implication that the Truth is such as to demand courage for facing it, is counterbalanced by Diana's exclamation, "Who can really *think*, and not think hopefully?"

None of Meredith's novels lacks an intellectual theme, and it was this that he himself regarded as most important. In the very last one he says: [1]

> "But the melancholy, the pathos of it, * * * have been sacrificed in the vain effort to render events as consequent to your understanding as a piece of logic, through an exposure of character!"

At the same time he surpasses all others in the treatment of love. Contemporary readers, who had had to be content with David and Dora, Pen and Laura, Rochester and Jane, Adam and Dinah, were vouchsafed a revelation,—which, however, they apparently did not at once appreciate,—in Richard and Lucy, Evan and Rose, Redworth and Diana, Dartrey and Nesta. To them all Meredith would say approvingly what he said warningly to a more unfortunate cavalier,—"You may love, and warmly love, so long as you are honest. Do not offend reason." [2] And in them all he illustrates the higher hedonism voiced by Lady Dunstane to her Tony, though from the negative

[1] *An Amazing Marriage*, 511. He adds, "Character must ever be a mystery, only to be explained in some degree by conduct; and that is very dependent upon accident."

[2] *The Egoist*, 4. It is in this connection that comedy "watches over sentimentalism with a birch-rod." And it is at the end of the same story that she is "grave and sisterly" toward Clara and Vernon, though when she regards certain others, "she compresses her lips."

side,—"The mistake of the world is to think happiness possible to the senses." [1]

In addition to these, Meredith gives us pictures of other than the purely romantic devotion. There is the brooding tenderness of maturity for childhood and youth: of Sir Austin, Lady Blandish, Wentworth, and Mrs. Berry, for Richard and later, Lucy; of Clara Middleton for Crossjay; of Rosamund for Beauchamp. This relationship is enhanced by a more intimate comradeship in the case of Lady Jocelyn and Rose, of Natalia Radnor and Nesta, and, in a happy-go-lucky fashion, of Roy Richmond and Harry. Nesta and Rose illustrate respectively Meredith's genuine and exquisite sentiment, and the omnipresent common sense which preserved it from sentimentality. When Nesta felt the first chill of the shadow on her life,— [2]

"She sent forth her flights of stories in elucidation of the hidden; and they were like white bird after bird winging to covert beneath a thundercloud; until her breast ached for the voice of the thunder: harsh facts: sure as she was of never losing her filial hold of the beloved."

When Rose determined to appeal their case to her mother, she said to Evan,— [3]

"You know she is called a philosopher; nobody knows how deep-hearted she is, though. My mother is true as steel. * * * When I say kindness, I don't mean any 'Oh, my child,' and tears and kisses and maundering, you know. You mustn't mind her thinking me a little fool."

[1] *Diana*, 429. This is where Meredith and Browning are at one;—not only in the obvious resemblance of a cramped and obscure style, but in the agreement as to a fundamental idea—that the justification of love lies in its intellectual companionship and spiritual inspiration.

[2] *One of Our Conquerors*, 340.

[3] *Evan Harrington*, 343.

Then there is the sisterly attachment between Rhoda and Dahlia Fleming that leads Rhoda's puritanic nature into a dictatorial fanaticism as disastrous in its results as Sir Austin's; there is friendship masculine between Beauchamp and Dr. Shrapnel; and friendship feminine between Lady Dunstane and Diana. It is not that Meredith has a monopoly on the portrayal of human affection. Lytton has to his credit the Chillinglys [1] and the Caxtons; Gaskell has the Gibsons; Dickens, Amy Dorrit, and Joe Gargary; Brontë, Caroline Helstone and her mother; Trollope, Lily Dale and hers; in Barry Lyndon, Thackeray gives us a base soul redeemed by love for a child, and in Colonel Newcome, Helen Pendennis, and Amelia Osborne, he presents a rather one-sided devotion, as does Eliot in Mrs. Transome,—though the latter does not feel called upon to exclaim, "By Heaven, it is pitiful, the bootless love of women for children in Vanity Fair!" But it is true that Meredith through the richness of his well-rounded nature was more able than the others to lift emotion fearlessly to a height of intensity, preserved there from any danger of a fall into bathos, because supported by intellect on the one hand and humor on the other.

Any final alignment must be left flexible, because of the numerous factors in the test. Writers may excel in one way or another. When, however, the same author reappears on every count, it begins to look suspicious, and the suspicion falls most heavily on Meredith. Others may come to the top twice or even thrice, but he alone is never wholly submerged, and is nearly always dominant. When

[1] The relation between Kenelm and his father is particularly fine, and is reflected in the youth's remark to a comrade,—"If human beings despise each other for being young and foolish, the sooner we are exterminated by that superior race which is to succeed us on earth, the better it will be."

Arnold Bennett declared that "Between Fielding and Meredith no entirely honest novel was written by anybody in England," he was merely following the twentieth century fad of depreciating the nineteenth,—any smart miss of sixteen being naturally more modern and sophisticated than her middle-aged mother. But in saying that "The death of George Meredith removes, not the last of the Victorian novelists, but the first of the modern school," he mentions an obvious fact, not really discredited by the chronological situation. This does not necessarily argue, be it said, that Meredith casts the forward shadow of coming events. His strong individuality did not lend itself to imitation, or even a prompt appreciation. Moreover, he had in him no germ either of *fin de siêcle* decadence or of its flaunting iconoclasm. In his own mountain range he is simply a preëminent peak, as in theirs were Chaucer, Shakespeare, Dryden, Johnson.

As to the lower plateaus and the foothills, the only thing of interest that develops through examining their juxtaposition, is the resultant effect on Thackeray. While the others stand firmly up to their own normal height, making no attempt to add a cubit to their stature, he seems constantly to be taking thought; nor is it thought that leads to conclusions of much moment. "His depth," like Lytton's, "is fathomable," but his air is of the most profound and meditative. It must be this, together with his *Snobs* and *Vanity Fair* (to both of which, acknowledgments are due) that has bewitched his critics and persuaded his readers into ranking him as the foremost Victorian satirist. That he is among the elect is undeniable, even to being "more long-winded than Horace and bitterer than Juvenal," [1] but to place him above

[1] Cecil Headlam, in his Introduction to *Selections from the British Satirists*.

them in any absolute way is to ignore the greater range of Dickens, the keener wit of Peacock and Butler, the rarer charm of Mrs. Gaskell and Trollope, and above all, the superior penetration and insight of George Eliot and Meredith.

It is not necessary, however, to make all distinctions invidious and all comparisons odious. Individually and collectively the Victorian satirists are to be accepted with the ungrudging appreciation they deserve. The terribly exacting author of *The New Machiavelli* recognized in their endowment to us nothing but "emasculated thought," "a hasty trial experiment, a gigantic experiment of the most slovenly and wasteful kind," "a persuasion that whatever is inconvenient or disagreeable to the English mind could be annihilated by not thinking about it,"—all resulting in "the clipped and limited literature that satisfied their souls." But there is consolation in the counter-discovery of Professor Sherman (in his *Modern Literature*) that there was a compensating economy, even in their failure: "Dickens, Kingsley, Reade, Mrs. Stowe, and the rest," he reminds us, "they did not seek to make the world over, but only to accomplish a few, simple things like abolishing slavery, sweat-shops, Corn Laws, the schools of Squeers, imprisonment for debt, the red tape of legal procedure, the belief in pestilence and typhoid as visitations of God—and all that sort of piddling amelioration."

For this modest ambition, the Victorians found satire an effective means, and they proved they could turn it also to more purely artistic uses. Such as their achievement was, they are doubtless content to rest in peace upon it, granting without jealousy to their illustrious successors whatever surpassing results they may be able to accomplish.

CHAPTER II

THE VICTORIAN CONTRIBUTION

By the nineteenth century the general inheritance in ideas and methods had become so cumulatively rich and various that the chances for novelty might seem correspondingly meager. But there is always something new under the sun, and the process of amalgamating that modicum of newness with the great bulk of the old and established goes steadily and eternally on—except for abnormal phases of retrogression, or revolution—forming that ceaseless change in changelessness we call history. The body of satiric tradition bequeathed to the Victorians underwent, accordingly, a normal amount of subtraction, addition, and modification, before being passed on to their successors.

The endowment itself was large and comprehensive, including both substance and modes, as well as a supplementary current of criticism and interpretation. In none of these were the Victorians responsible for a transformation, yet none did they leave *in statu quo*. In form, however, a great change had recently occurred, operating both positively and negatively, of which they were just in time to take advantage. The positive side of it was the development of the satiric novel in the preceding century, whereby the channel of fiction had already been accommodated to the satiric stream. This tendency was reinforced by the negative side, the abandonment of English satire's one conventional outlet, the heroic couplet, which naturally diverted the current

still more. The chance that made Byron not only a brilliant climax to the long line that extended back to Hall and Lodge, and through them to Juvenal and Horace, but the conclusion as well, is one of the striking situations in the history of literature. This transference of the main bulk of satire from the medium of poetry to that of prose would probably have been accomplished in any case, for since the Romantic Triumph, poetry had been again devoted to its true mission as the voice of imagination and spiritual vision, while at the same time the novel was finding a congenial sphere of action as a public forum for the discussion of all things from current events to a philosophy of life. Satire, being presumably a utilitarian product, would naturally be more suitably allied with fiction, a branch of Applied Art, than with the Pure Art of poetry. This union is advantageous for another reason,—the improvement as to proportion. In verse satire the emphasis is on the satire; in satiric fiction, the former noun has been relegated to the qualifying function of the adjective. Since one of the perils of satire is over-emphasis, and since it can best avoid this peril by combination, the gain in this arrangement is obvious. As a matter of fact, pure, isolated satire is a non-existent abstraction, as is illustrated by the very circumstance of the origin of the name. The *satura lanx* was a dish of assorted fruit, and the primitive *saturæ* which borrowed its name were the impromptu miscellanies in speech which constituted the social part of the old Roman Harvest Home. Lucilius and later Horace, wanting a title for their running commentary on men and manners, found this conveniently ready. When Juvenal adopted it, he had no notion of restricting the application: [1]

[1] *Satire* I, 85.

"Quicquid agunt homines, votum, timor, ira, voluptas,
Gaudia, discursus, nostri est farrago libelli."

With all these things is the modern novel also concerned, and it too finds some of them amenable to humorous treatment, and some only to serious. But so far as change is concerned, it occurs during this period more in substance than in form. Vice and Folly are still the nominal targets, whenever these traits seem to be a cause or an effect of Deceit.[1] But they are somewhat altered in shape, in consequence of a more subtle analysis of their nature. The great discovery was made about the deceiver that he is quite as likely as not to be deceiving himself as well as others,—more than others, indeed, inasmuch as his very blindness renders him the more transparent. The world, moreover, growing in suspiciousness and incredulity, is the less easily deceived and the more able to detect the fraud, which thus reacts like a boomerang against its perpetrator. In the nineteenth century Pecksniff really was an archaism; and since Dickens no novelist has portrayed anything so bald as an unadulterated and unexplained hypocrite.[2] The evolution in portrayal from the hypocrite to the sentimentalist is perfectly illustrated by the difference between Pecksniff and Bulstrode. For the latter we have only a little less sympathy than for Hawthorne's Arthur Dimmisdale, in spite of his inferiority in fineness and ultimate courage. For we are shown the "strange, piteous conflict in the soul of this unhappy man, who had longed for years to be better than he

[1] One may generalize that the object of satire is deceit as one may call the sky blue. It does not always appear so. Indeed, it shows at times almost every other color.

[2] The motto of *Erewhon Revisited* is from the *Iliad:* "Him do I hate, even as I hate hell fire, who says one thing, and hides another in his heart." But while Butler is vehement enough, he is less fervent than this would indicate.

was."[1] Even his prayer after becoming virtually a murderer is not really a piece of hypocrisy. "Does anyone suppose," asks Eliot, "that private prayer is necessarily candid—necessarily goes to the roots of action?"[2]

George Eliot is, however, even more impressed with the auto-intoxication of optimism as it manifests itself in what might be called group psychology; and especially against a disregard of the law of cause and effect does she turn the shafts of her quiet irony. At the period when the Raveloe tale opens,—[3]

"It was still that glorious war-time which was felt to be a peculiar favor of Providence toward the landed interest, and the fall of prices had not yet come to carry the race of small squires and yeomen down that road to ruin for which extravagant habits and bad husbandry were plentifully anointing their wheels."

In pursuance of this comfortable philosophy,—

"* * * the rich ate and drank freely, accepting gout and apoplexy as things that ran mysteriously in respectable families, and the poor thought that the rich were entirely in the right of it to lead a jolly life."

In another story we are introduced to some "pious Dissenting women, who took life patiently, and thought that salvation depended chiefly on predestination, and not at all on cleanliness."[4] In a higher social class this inno-

[1] *Middlemarch*, III, 264.

[2] *Ibid.*, 271.

[3] *Silas Marner*, 26-27. In the same narrative the author uses the misfortunes of Godfrey to illustrate the truth that "Favorable Chance is the god of all men who follow their own devices instead of obeying a law they believe in. * * * The evil principle deprecated in that religion, is the orderly sequence by which the seed brings forth a crop after its kind." 91.

[4] *Felix Holt*, I, 6.

cence of the connection between effort and achievement leads to the fatuous complacency from which Gwendolen Harleth was aroused by the cruel shock of being told the truth about her musical abilities: [1]

"She had moved in a society where everything, from low arithmetic to high art, is of the amateur kind politely supposed to fall short of perfection only because gentlemen and ladies are not obliged to do more than they like—otherwise they would probably give forth abler writings and show themselves more commanding artists than any the world is at present obliged to put up with."

Another busy circle had made two important discoveries: the superiority of the probable over the actual; and the advantage of a well-chosen nomenclature, whereby a taste for cruelty may be gratified by the simple device of calling it kindness. The first was made over the gossip about Bulstrode: [2]

"Everbody liked better to conjecture how the thing was, than simply to know it; for conjecture soon became more confident than knowledge, and had a more liberal allowance for the incompatible."

The second developed in a later phase of the same affair: [3]

"To be candid, in Middlemarch phraseology, meant, to use an early opportunity of letting your friends know that you did not take a cheerful view of their capacity, their conduct, or their position; and a robust candour never waited to be asked for its opinion."

It was because of this understanding of the limitless possibilities and universal prevalence of self-deception

[1] *Daniel Deronda*, I, 395. [2] *Middlemarch*, III, 288. [3] *Ibid.*, 329.

that Meredith was able to see the absurdity in egoism, which is the form of the malady induced by vanity. And this perception, as a modern critic observes, is the source of the contrast between two well-known egoists,—Sir Charles Grandison and Sir Willoughby Patterne: [1]

"Both, superficially viewed, are the same type: a male paragon before whom a bevy of women burn incense. But O the difference! Grandison is serious to his author, while Meredith, in skinning Willoughby alive like another Marsyas, is once and for all making the worship of the ego hateful."

If one should ask, remembering the necessity for self-assertion in the exacting requirements of our human destiny, why so indispensable a thing as egoism should be ridiculous, Meredith has his answer ready: [2]

"Nay, to be an exalted variety is to come under the calm curious eye of the comic spirit, and to be probed for what you are."

It is in "imposing figures" that the malign imps "love to uncover ridiculousness." Moreover,— [3]

"They dare not be chuckling while Egoism is valiant, while sober, while socially valuable, nationally serviceable. They wait."

This turn of the satiric road from the hypocritical to the sentimental side of deceit marked a passage not only through traits of character, as already noted, but through the realm of institutions, where it might at first seem to be more out of place. But there is no reason why organizations should not be as sentimental as the individuals of

[1] Burton, *Masters of the English Novel*, 290.
[2] *Essay on Comedy*, 21.
[3] Prelude to *The Egoist*.

which they are composed. Indeed, so far as crowd psychology is in operation, they would be strengthened in self-deception by their very numbers. Whether this is the case or not, it is true that the tendency increased from Peacock to Butler to see in organized groups the absurdity of a complacent inefficiency. Not because they were failures did English institutions come under the rod, but because they flourished under a mighty delusion of success. Smug incompetence, self-satisfied futility, these were the gaping incongruities between pretense and performance that made tempting targets out of Society, Church, School, and State; and thitherward were trained the big and little guns of the satirists.

There is, of course, an underlying cause of this transference of interest from the more simple and patent hypocrite to the more subtle and baffling sentimentalist, individual and collective, and that is found in the spirit of investigation, analysis, probing beneath surfaces,—not new, to be sure, but newly operative on a large scale,—known as Science. Science in the intellectual world, and democracy in the political are the two forces which began in the nineteenth century the Conquest of Canaan that now in the twentieth they are gradually completing.

That these two armies are allies is obvious. The end of democracy is an elevation of the whole plane of human life,—a leveling up and not the leveling down so feared by Carlyle and the conservative English opinion of the time. On the emotional and ethical side it is humanitarian, but in itself it is a rational utilitarian principle. For this unquestionably practical end, Pure Science furnishes the justification, indeed, the initial premises, by showing the biology and psychology of all relationships, the respective effects of coöperation and antagonism in the nat-

ural world, and kindred factors; while Applied Science supplies the means to that end by discoveries and inventions bearing on the amelioration and enhancement of living conditions.

The recognition of such startling innovations would be inevitably slow, and their adoption still slower. But it is precisely in their ultimately successful struggle for admission into the life and thought of the nineteenth century that we trace the evolution of the satire of the period, for the satiric reaction is merely one of the many reflections of that struggle.

A humanitarian democracy has turned the old *ex cathedra* criticism into the forensic. The satirist has been obliged, as one commentator observes, to descend from the upper window whence he had been haranguing the mob below; he might have added, much of the mob itself has been admitted into the entrance halls at least of the great Administration Building of modern life. But meanwhile the scientific method has added reason to emotion, so that while the democratic ideal was conceived in a rationalized sympathy, the stress has slipped more and more from the sympathetic to the rational element. None of the Victorians expressly would have denied the Moral Obligation to be Intelligent, but George Eliot, Meredith, and Butler were the first to make a real point of it. For by the latter half of the century the laboratory had come to be acknowledged as the colleague, if not the successor, of the pulpit, for implicit sermonizing as well as explicit instruction. And in the exercise of these functions, while the pulpit may indulge at times in a decorous ridicule, it is the laboratory that is the real, spontaneous, unconscious satirist. When the solemn moral exhortation, *Ought*, was supplanted by the autocratic sci-

entific command, *Must—if*, the expression changed from earnest pleading to detached humor. For the moralist takes himself, his message, and his hearers, seriously, but the scientist has the indifferent attitude that if you refuse to obey, the consequences, serious indeed and not to be averted or escaped, will come, not in the guise of punishment or retribution, but through the inexorable operation of law. Accordingly, if you try to delude yourself into the supposition that you can evade the orders of nature, the joke is on you.

While, therefore, in Victorian satire the old familiar faces of Society, State, and Church reappear, they are subjected to a new treatment, as the result of a new diagnosis.

The School and the Press are the only additions to the time-honored objects, because of their more recent emergence into the light. The erection of the School into a public institution, together with the subsidence of the Church into the sphere of private life, marks indeed a radical change in viewpoint,—advancing from the assumption that the State must insure the religion of its citizens, let them be educated how they might (except that for a long time they had no choice but to take their secular learning from the hands of the clergy) to the realization that if those responsible for the general welfare would provide for a general diffusion of enlightenment, the religious sentiment might safely be trusted to those whom it concerned, namely, the individuals themselves. In regard to all these institutions the old, sharply defined contrast between guilty, satirized protagonist and indicting, satirical antagonist has disappeared. In its place is a decided tendency toward the fellow-member, fellow-citizen, fellow-sinner attitude, which at least has the advantage

always held by the empiric knowledge of the insider over the deductive inference of the outsider.

In the social field the most notable alteration is in the satire of woman. From the time of the Greek Simonides and the Hebrew epigrammatists, feminine foibles have been alluring game for masculine-made arrows. The shrew, the gossip, the blue-stocking, the interfering step-mother, the intriguing wife, the extravagant daughter, the lady of fashion, have been detected with unerring clarity of vision and pursued with accomplished skill. They have also been taken for granted. It was not until the modern inquiry into cause and effect was instituted that the feminine failure was viewed as an effect of which society was largely the cause, by withholding opportunity on one hand, and on the other encouraging the very ignorance and inanity it affected to despise. This discovery led logically to the shifting of the satire from effect back to cause, and the addition of another item to the list wherein the concerted action of the social group is held accountable for any malign influence on its members.

This probing into causes is even more sweepingly operative in the larger society of mankind and the body politic. The study of economics and sociology inevitably has switched the old partisan antagonism into a new opposition based more consciously on theories of government,— still partisan, to be sure, but less on personal and more on philosophical grounds. The new element this brings into political satire is the effort to create a public sense of shame for official incompetence, since in a democracy (and such, in some form or other, is almost every modern State) the blame for this incompetence rests ultimately on the public. Modern critics may echo Isaiah's scornful complaint of state officialdom,— "The ancient and the honor-

able man, he is the head; and the prophet that teacheth lies, he is the tail,"—but their remedy would lie not in increased reliance on a theocracy but in a more adequate popular referendum. John Barton concludes his impassioned tirade against mill-owners and capitalists with the argument,— [1]

"Don't think to come over me with th' old tale, that the rich know nothing of the trials of the poor; I say, if they don't know, they ought to know. We're their slaves as long as we can work; we pile up their fortunes with the sweat of our brows, and yet we are to live as separate as Dives and Lazarus, with a great gulf betwixt us: but I know who was best off then."

On another occasion he adds this explanation,— [2]

"What we all feel sharpest is the want of inclination to try and help the evils which come like blights at times over the manufacturing places, while we see the masters can stop work and not suffer."

To this serious and personal grief Meredith responds, as it were, in his more impersonal and ironic manner. Diana represents the view from a position of equality, and the satire of one's own class: [3]

"And charity is haunted, like everything we do. Only I say with my whole strength—yes, I am sure, in spite of the men professing that they are practical, the rich will not move without a goad. I have and hold—you shall hunger and covet, until you are strong enough to force my hand;—that's the speech of the wealthy. And they are Christians. In name. Well, I thank heaven I'm at war with myself.'"

Kingsley is spurred by the subject to a bitter sarcasm: [4]

[1] *Mary Barton*, 6.
[2] *Ibid.*, 317.
[3] *Diana of the Crossways*, 48.
[4] *Yeast*, 34.

"The finest of us are animals, after all, and live by eating and sleeping, and, taken as animals, not so badly off, either—unless we happen to be Dorsetshire laborers—or Spitalfield weavers—or colliery children—or marching soldiers—or, I am afraid, one half of English souls this day."

Nor is he lacking in a constructive outlook. In connection with a fling at the "amusingly inconsistent, however well-meant scene in *Coningsby*," in which Disraeli illustrates his idea of a beneficent aristocracy, he has one of his characters meditate that— [1]

"It may suit the Mr. Lyles of this age * * * to make the people constantly and visibly comprehend that property is their protector and their friend, but I question whether it will suit the people themselves, unless they can make property understand that it owes them something more definite than protection."

At that time there was not much disposition to believe these ills could be cured by legislation. On the contrary, the numerous satiric hits at various governmental departments were aimed not at the general *laissez faire* policy of the State, but at its indifferent success in the matters over which it had already assumed jurisdiction, and its unwarranted encroachment into others. The reasoning seemed to be that an institution which had been unfaithful and convicted of inertness, graft, and stupidity in its limited operations would be unlikely to be more alert, honest, and intelligent if its burdens were increased. David Copperfield is shocked to learn from Mr. Spenlow the ways of the law, and still more so at Mr. Spenlow's cold-

[1] *Yeast*, 236. He also has a sneer for the patronizing scheme of Vieuxbois, in which "of course the clergy and the gentry were to educate the poor, who were to take down thankfully as much as it was thought proper to give them: and all beyond was 'self-will' and 'private judgment,' the fathers of Dissent and Chartism, Trades-union strikes, and French Revolutions." 117.

ness toward the idea of reform.[1] Henry Little wades through and climbs over all sorts of official obstacles until "he had done, in sixty days, what a true inventor will do in twenty-four hours, whenever the various metallic ages shall be succeeded by the age of reason." [2] A prison inspector is finally confronted with actual facts of a horrifying nature: [3]

"How unreal and idle appeared now the twenty years gone in tape and circumlocution! Away went his life of shadows—his career of watery polysyllables meandering through the great desert into the Dead Sea."

But more subtle and vital than all these errors,—the error indeed at the root of them all,—is the failure of the State to utilize the fine material placed at its disposal, potentially if not actually, in the lives of noble and capable youth. No one before Lytton could have laid at the

[1] He reflects, "I had not the hardihood to suggest to Dora's father that possibly we might even improve the world a little, if we got up early in the morning, and took off our coats to the work; but I confessed that I thought we might improve the Commons." *David Copperfield*, II, 44. The counter argument brought forward to dampen his enthusiasm was that more good was done to the sinecurists than harm to the public,—whose ignorance was its bliss. "Under the Prerogative Office, the country had been glorious. Insert the wedge into the Prerogative Office, and the country would cease to be glorious, He considered it the principle of a gentleman to take things as he found them."

[2] *Put Yourself in his Place*, 401.

[3] *Never too Late to Mend*, 411. In the same story Reade lays great stress on the importance of the inspector's duty: "Only for this task is required, not the gullibility that characterizes the many, but the sagacity that distinguishes the few." 360.

It was this sagacity, combined with keen imagination, quick sympathy, and prompt and efficient action, that rendered the chaplain Eden a success under discouraging difficulties. The very foundation of his success was laid when he insisted on experiencing for himself the straight jacket and the solitary confinement, to the unbounded but amused mystification of the jail officials. And the shrewd *coup d'état* by which he converted one of them revealed the profound truth that "ignorance is the mother of cruelty."

door of society the wasted possibilities of a Godolphin. No one before Meredith could have made the thwarted career of a Beauchamp a pitiful satire on "his indifferent England," who appeared, "with a quiet derision that does not belie her amiable passivity, to have reduced in Beauchamp's career the boldest readiness for public action, and some good stout efforts besides, to the flat result of an optically discernible influence of our hero's character in the domestic circle: perhaps a faintly outlined circle or two beyond it." [1]

In Society and the State all opposition is necessarily factional, for none can stand entirely outside. This was true of the Church also, during its undisputed supremacy, when to be excommunicated was equivalent to being imprisoned or otherwise put outside the pale. But by the sixteenth century Skelton could say in *Colyn Clout*,

> "For, as farre as I can se,
> It is wrong with eche degre;
> For the temporalte
> Accuseth the spiritualte;
> The spirituall agayne
> Dothe grudge and complayne
> Upon the temporall men:"

By the eighteenth, Voltaire could get a hearing, albeit a hostile and scandalized one. And by the nineteenth, we have not only Brontë and Kingsley censuring from within, but Meredith and Butler from without. So far as there is a new note in the censure, it is in harmony with the whole strain of the time. For the old crude gibes against the old crude faults of hypocrisy, sensuality, and greed, is substituted the criticism that a huge organization fails

[1] *Beauchamp's Career*, 40.

to utilize the tremendous power of its equipment, prestige, and authority, in the furtherance of general progress and the establishment of a genuine kingdom of God here upon earth. For from the spiritualte as well as the temporalte the new humanitarian spirit demands recognition and service.

These modifications in form and substance were induced by a modification, probably unconscious, of the idea of satire itself, and they in turn reacted on it to strengthen the changing conception. The two main elements,—a wider socialization in the point of view, and a firmer insistence on an understanding of conditions such as could not be secured under the old artless habit of accepting the premises,—stand for that union of feeling and intelligence which was the ideal of the nineteenth century. "Men," says Meredith, "and the ideas of men, which are * * * actually the motives of men in a greater degree than their appetites; these are my theme;" [1] and again, "The Gods of this world's contests demand it of us, in relation to them, that the mind, and not the instincts, shall be at work." [2] The corollary of this is that though satire may be "a passion to sting and tear," it must do so "on rational grounds." [3] "Satire," says Trollope, "though it may exaggerate the vice it lashes, is not justified in creating it in order that it may be lashed. Caricature may too easily become a slander, and satire a libel." [4] Sympathy and in-

[1] *Beauchamp's Career*, 7.

[2] *Diana of the Crossways*, 153.

[3] *One of Our Conquerors*, 70. Etymologically, it is only the sarcastic variety which pushes the attack so far.

[4] *Autobiography*, 86. Even the ingenuous Mr. Brooke of Middlemarch had made the subtle discovery that "Satire, you know, should be true up to a certain point." And a century before, satire's warmest defender, John Brown, had cautioned the wits against degrading her "to a scold."

telligence have no objection to pungency and forcefulness, but they have no real need for truculence or unfairness. It is, as Garnett suggests, the unsophisticated man who regards satire as the offspring of ill-nature. Such was the intellectual status of Lady Middleton, who could not feel an affinity for Elinor and Marianne Dashwood: [1]

"Because they neither flattered herself nor her children, she could not believe them good-natured; and because they were fond of reading, she fancied them satirical: perhaps without exactly knowing what it was to be satirical; but that did not signify. It was censure in common use, and easily given."

The vague notion that a satirist is something disagreeable will of course never quite be eradicated, at least not until people learn to like being ridiculed and criticised. But in manner he is undeniably growing less disagreeable than has been his wont. Another reason for this, in addition to the changes already noted, is the increased activity of that reflexive sense of humor which operates as an antitoxin to the vanity inherent in all critics. A wholesome fear of being absurd serves to reduce one's chances of being that rich anomaly, a ridiculous satirist. The modern satirist may possess a mind conscious to itself of right and a conviction that he has a mission to perform. But he is more prone to conceal or even disclaim these things than to advertise them. Even Fielding did not proclaim, as he might have done, that he first adventured. Peacock trusted to his readers to discover that fools being his theme, satire must be his song. Since his time, satire, while questioning all things with a new penetration, has succeeded in taking on an air of unconcern and in realizing that neither promises nor apologies are necessary. Post-Byronic

[1] *Sense and Sensibility*, 244.

satire seldom vaunts itself, and, however superior it may feel, it pretends that it is not puffed up. A historian describes the change that takes place between the Age of Elizabeth, when satire "was the pastime of very young men, who 'railed on Lady Fortune in good set terms,'" and the Commonwealth, when the combatants "left Nature and Fortune with their withers unwrung, and aimed at the joints in the harness of their enemies." [1] To the Victorians, satire was neither a pastime nor a matter for deadly earnestness. Armored antagonists had gone out of fashion; and Lady Fortune was left to the metaphysicians.

It is, indeed, a matter of curious interest that one object of satire, life itself, which had drawn fire occasionally all the way from Aristophanes to Bryon, should have been neglected by the Victorians,—though the neglect may be accounted for by their interest in the concrete and their generally optimistic outlook. On the other hand, one of the most philosophic and least optimistic of them devotes several bow-shots to a sort of counter attack, against those who consider the universe a fit subject for satire. The Prelude to *Middlemarch* identifies the heroine as one of those unfortunate women of deep souls and shallow circumstances, "who found for themselves no epic life wherein there was a constant unfolding of far-resonant action." To this the comment is added: [2]

"Some have felt that these blundering lives are due to the inconvenient indefiniteness with which the Supreme Power has

[1] Raleigh: *The English Novel*, 112.

[2] *Middlemarch*, I, 174. Cf. the taunt of the practical young Radical to Esther Lyon, on her choice of literature: " * * * gentlemen like your Rénés, who have no particular talent for the finite, but a general sense that the infinite is the right thing for them." *Felix Holt*, II, 34.

fashioned the natures of women: if there were one level of feminine incompetence as strict as the ability to count three and no more, the social lot of women might be treated with scientific certitude."

The fact, however, that "Here and there is born a Saint Theresa, foundress of nothing," is not an irony of fate so much as a folly of society. Later in the story the philosophizing of one of the characters leads the author to the reflection:

"Some gentlemen have made an amazing figure in literature by general discontent with the universe as a trap of dulness into which their great souls have fallen by mistake; but the sense of a stupendous self and an insignificant world may have its consolations."

Nay, the metaphysician himself does not altogether escape. Piero de Cosimo is accused of being one and repudiates the idea:[1]

"Not I, Messer Greco; a philosopher is the last sort of animal I should choose to resemble. I find it enough to live, without spinning lies to account for life. Fowls cackle, asses bray, women chatter, and philosophers spin false reasons—that's the effect the sight of the world brings out of them."

This perception of the Idol of the Cave, and the whole trend of Eliot's argument is evidence that the pragmatic attitude existed some time before it was so vividly and enduringly defined by Professor James.

Since these various changes bring about no complete break with the satiric tradition, we may expect to find the connecting links with both the remote and the immediate past as much in evidence as are the features of novelty. Peacock's indebtedness was to the Athenian com-

[1] *Romola*, I, 287.

edy, and Lytton's to the near-contemporary Byron. Mrs. Gaskell had Jane Austen and Crabbe and the whole gallery of eighteenth-century village vignettes for her humors of rural life; while her *Mary Barton* probably reached back to *Sybil*, as it did forward to the line of economic novels. Thackeray had a large store to draw on for his burlesques, as did Lytton and Butler for their pseudo-Utopias.

Nor is there any abrupt termination to satiric affairs as the Victorians left them at the end of the century. The years stand as sign posts along the way, and not as barriers across it. The changes they call our attention to were less patent to those in and by whom they were working than to us with our perspective. From our moderate distance we are able to discern not only the evolutionary process but some of its results.

In a national award the satiric prize would undoubtedly go to the French, whose genius for satire not only gave them preëminence among the peoples in that line, but gave their satire precedence over their other literature. But with this exception, the total effect of satire in the Victorian novel ranks artistically with the highest at large, and surpasses some other elements of the fiction itself. For the nineteenth-century novel is undeniably didactic, and therefore, while it gains in point, significance, and intellectual interest, it loses in romantic interest and esthetic purity. It is here that satire becomes its salvation, for by giving much of the criticism a humorous turn it counteracts the didactic effect, enhances delight, and, to readers of a sensitive response, makes a point that would not be sharpened by increased vehemence. No invective against the Countess de Saldar could be so illuminating as Lady Jocelyn's thorough relish of her as a specimen. It is of a piece with Mr. Bennet's enjoyment

of Collins and Wickham; [1] with Lamb's avowal that he would rather lose the legacy Dorrell cheated him out of than "be without the idea of that specious old rogue;" and with the dismay of Don Antonio over the restored sanity of Don Quixote.[2] It is the secret of Trollope's charm, as Hawthorne indicated when he described the impression of those "beef and ale" novels,—

"* * * as if some giant had hewn a great lump out of the earth and put it under a glass case, with all its inhabitants going about their daily business, and not suspecting that they were being made a show of."

It would have been a saving grace to many of the *dramatis personæ* if they could have shared the experience of a romantically inclined youth who, after building an air castle in which he figured first as a conquering hero and then as a magnanimous patron, suddenly "came to:" [3]

"And then he turned upon himself with laughter, discovering a most wholesome power, barely to be suspected in him yet."

"What a pity it is," exclaimed Butler,[4] "that Christian never met Mr. Common-Sense with his daughter,

[1] In his initial pleasure over Wickham, he defies "even Sir William Lucas himself to produce a more valuable son-in-law," but later, after reading a letter from Collins, he concludes,—"I cannot help giving him the preference even over Wickham, much as I value the impudence and hypocrisy of my son-in-law."

[2] "God forgive you," he exclaims to Carrasco, "the injury you have done the whole world, in endeavouring to restore to his senses the most diverting madman in it. Do you not see, sir, that the benefit of his recovery will not counterbalance the pleasure his extravagancies afford?" III, 449.

[3] *Evan Harrington*, 457. Cf. a similar idea in *The Shaving of Shagpat*. The narrator of *The Newcomes* speaks in the Preface of the "pert little satirical monitor" which sprang up inwardly and upset the fond humbug he was cherishing. It is a curious circumstance that neither Dickens nor Thackeray, with all their humor, could create characters with that quality. Even of Becky it might be said that she never did a foolish thing, nor ever said a wise one.

[4] *Note Books*, 189.

Good-Humour, and her affianced husband, Mr. Hate-Cant." Bunyan doubtless would have replied that he also approved of these somewhat worldly characters, but that they were people of less importance in their day than they became thereafter. The progress of the modern pilgrim is toward a City of Sanitation rather than Holiness, but sanitation is interpreted so widely as to include the soul also in the cleansing process. For this work Common-Sense and Hate-Cant are our efficiency experts; and that Good-Humour should be a member of their household is inevitable at a time when graciousness is accounted not a negligible adornment but a fundamental virtue.

To the poise and proportion contributed to satire by the emphasis on the quality of humor, must be added the justice that comes from a rationalized sympathy, and from the counter, positive element which restores the balance pulled down by destructive criticism. A striking example of both is furnished by Meredith in his explanation of one of his characters. No pretender has ever been more skillfully pursued or more thoroughly unmasked than the ambitious daughter of the great Mel. After such treatment no one before this time could have presented so fairly the case for the defendant: [1]

"Now the two Generals—Rose Jocelyn and the Countess de Saldar—had brought matters to this pass; and from the two tactical extremes: the former by openness and dash; the latter by subtlety and her own interpretations of the means extended to her by Providence. I will not be so bold as to state which of the two I think right. Good and evil work together in this world. If the Countess had not woven the tangle, and gained Evan time, Rose would never have seen his blood,—never have had her spirit hurried out of all shows and forms

[1] *Evan Harrington*, 368.

and habits of thought, up to the gates of existence, as it were, where she took him simply as God created him, and clave to him."

Thackeray and Trollope also apologize for some of the people they ridicule, but with this characteristic difference, that Thackeray bespeaks your indulgence for a Pendennis or a Philip on the Horatian ground,

> *"Nam vitiis nemo sine nascitur; optimus ille est*
> *Qui minimis urgetur."*

But Trollope conscientiously reminds the reader that his picture of an Archdeacon Grantly, a George Bertram, even a Mrs. Proudie, is one-sided; that their dramatic and amusing faults have been allowed to overshadow their less entertaining but existent virtues; and that to know all would be, not to forgive all, but to forgive judiciously. His story of the childish lapse and manly recovery of the vicar Robarts concludes with the reflection, "A man may be very imperfect and yet worth a great deal." [1] This is a clear, cool discrimination far more difficult to attain than Thackeray's nebulous implication that though this man is certainly very imperfect and not worth a great deal yet his dear womenkind excuse him and we adore them for it.

George Eliot is too stern to do much excusing, but she always gives due weight to "the terrible coercion of our deeds." If she insists on the baleful effect of yielding to temptation, she insists also on an appreciation of the tempting force. She analyzes the culprit: [2]

[1] *Framley Parsonage*, 306.

[2] *Adam Bede*, II, 37. Cf. Lord Fleetwood's complaint to Carinthia that she has hit him hard and justly, followed by his acknowledgment,—"Not you. Our deeds are the hard hitters. We learn when they begin to flagellate, stroke upon stroke! Suppose we hold a costly thing in the hand and dash it to the ground—no recovery of it, none!" *An Amazing Marriage*, 439.

"The action which before commission has been seen with that blended common-sense and fresh untarnished feeling which is the healthy eye of the soul, is looked at afterwards with the lens of apologetic ingenuity, through which all things that men call beautiful and ugly are seen to be made up of textures very much alike."

But at the same time she warns his judges:

"Our deeds determine us as much as we determine our deeds; and until we know what has been or will be the peculiar combination of outward with inward facts, which constitutes a man's critical actions, it will be better not to think ourselves wise about his character."

Elsewhere, on the same theme, she indicates her general impression of the relative amounts of human wisdom and folly: [1]

"And to judge wisely I suppose we must know how things appear to the unwise; that kind of appearance making the larger part of the world's history."

This is in agreement with the point of the lines written on the portrait of Beau Nash at Bath, placed between the busts of Newton and Pope:

> "This picture placed these busts between,
> Gives satire all its strength:
> Wisdom and Wit are little seen,
> But Folly at full length."

But this Victorian painter of Folly, and at least some of her contemporaries, endeavored to make satire realistic by drawing Wit and Wisdom on a proportionate scale. It was in recognition of this that Stevenson said,

[1] *Daniel Deronda*, II, 86.

"My compliments to George Eliot for her Rosamund Vincy; the ugly work of satire she has transmuted to the ends of art by the companion figure of Lydgate; and the satire was much wanted for the education of young men."

Victorian literature would not have cared to produce a *Ship of Fools*,—though a passenger list might easily be culled out from its fiction,—nor a *Hudibras*, nor a *Dunciad*, nor even a *Tartuffe*, for George Warrington voiced the general sentiment when he said of that great drama that it could not be reckoned great in comparison with *Othello*, because "'a mere villainous hypocrite should not be chief of a great piece.'" [1]

This segment of literature may not be more sincere in its claim of truth-telling, but it shows more art in its method; and it is perhaps even less flattering to human nature in its assumption that simple exposure, without exaggeration, is quite enough.

Nor did it ever expect its satire to prove revolutionary. Peacock, first on the list, confessed, through one of his characters, of having been cured of a passion for reforming the world, "by the conviction of the inefficacy of moral theory with respect to producing a practical change in the mass of mankind." He adds,—[2]

"Custom is the pillar round which opinion twines, and interest is the tie that binds it. It is not by reason that practical change can be effected, but by making a puncture to the quick in the feelings of personal hope and personal fear."

The fear of being ridiculous is of course one of those which may be punctured to the quick, and thereby a practical change effected. It is also true that, the human constitution and capacity being what they are, constant

[1] *The Virginians*, II, 363.

[2] *Melincourt*, II, 14.

criticism is necessary. It is the spur, the brake, the corrective, to inform us when we are going too slow, too fast, or in the wrong direction. It is not by nature an agreeable thing, and there are times when it should not be made so. But if there are deeds and characters beyond the reach of humor, it is equally true, conversely, as Meredith says: [1] "There are questions as well as persons that only the Comic can fitly touch." The paradox arises in the fact that while criticism is essentially scientific, satire is a branch of esthetics, which nevertheless has practical proclivities. These it does no harm to exercise, providing it wreaks no violence on its character as an art. But the effect of satire must not be confused with its quality. It cannot be said that he satirizes best who reforms most,—the harvest of reform from satiric seed being granted. Concerning a pitchfork or muckrake there is no question of art: concerning a statue there is no question of utility: but satire is like a silver spoon, which partakes of both qualities, and is estimated sometimes according to one, sometimes the other, and sometimes a compromise between the two.

"*C'est une étrange entreprise*," exclaimed Molière, "*que celle de faire rire les hommêtes gens*." The strangeness of it becomes more striking when we remember that the laughter of the race is directed against itself and at the very things over which it is most sensitive,—its own inept follies and poor flimsy pretenses. But it is unendurable only in the form of the "grinning sneer" of Blifil. Even ridicule may be welcome if it comes from the genial Allworthy, whose "smiles at folly were indeed such as we may suppose the angels bestow on the absurdities of mankind." Not all satirists are so benign, but such

[1] *Essay on Comedy*, 62.

benignity is not incompatible with the finest satire. Meredith himself, after writing a dozen novels permeated with the most pungent satire, said in the last one that "if we bring reason to scan our laugh at pure humanity, it is we who are in place of the ridiculous, for doing what reason disavows." [1]

It may be that as we reason more we laugh less; and that brings the question whether it were wiser to check the reasoning or quench the laughter. Since, however, laughter is likely to improve in quality as it diminishes in quantity, we may be content to abjure the witticism at which "the fool lifteth up his voice with laughter," and substitute the reflective wit over which "the clever man will scarce smile quietly." Such was the mild aspiration of the humorous Victorians; but though mild, the spirit was ubiquitous. It gave tone to the pessimism of Thompson and temper to the optimism of Stevenson; it colored darkly the defiant pages of Carlyle and tinged lightly the protesting paragraphs of Arnold; it lent an edge to the sentiment of Tennyson and humanized the philosophy of Browning. It even dignified the comicality of *Punch*, for Douglas Jerrold, at least, was far from being an irresponsible jester. His gruesome *Dish of Glory*, with its ironical advice to the French to eat the Algerians as fast as they conquer them, will bear comparison with *The Modest Proposal*. The dedication of volume eight also illustrates the new effect of self-turned irony:

> "As young Aurora, with her blaze of light,
> Into the shade throws all the pride of night,
> And pales presumptuous stars, who vainly think
> That every eye is on them as they blink:

[1] *An Amazing Marriage*, 202.

So *Punch*, the light and glory of the time,
His wit and wisdom brilliant as sublime,
Scares into shades Cant's hypocritic throng,
Abashes Folly, and exposes wrong."

This may sound like an echo from the Elizabethans and the Augustans; but the difference wherewith the Victorians wear their rue is as important as it is subtle. The two great influences of their time, Science and Democracy, operating upon their life and literature, made them at once sensitive to the reasons for man's shortcomings, and sensible of the absurd position of the avowed castigator—who, moreover, by his very situation as a sharp-shooter renders himself in turn the more conspicuous target.

Man's record here below gives little cause, it is true, for congratulation; so discounted are his astonishing successes by his disheartening, hopeless failures. Colossal in blunder as in achievement, stupendous in fanaticism as in imagination, nevertheless he may maintain, on the authority of a deterministic philosophy, that he has literally done the best he could. His very faculty of deception is often but an adoption of that protective coloring recognized as one of Nature's most admirable devices. The human race is indeed provocative, but who that understands can have the heart to yield to the provocation? Even the most accomplished satirist of his time concluded that he would stick to sober philosophy,—[1]

"And irony and satire off me throw.
They crack a childish whip, drive puny herds,
Where numbers crave their sustenance in words."

But though a knowledge of mortal psychology does have a tendency to take the starch out of satire, it does

[1] Meredith, in *Patience and Foresight.*

not thereby destroy the fabric but only leaves it the more diaphanous. It no longer rustles and crackles but flows instead with the sweeter liquefaction of Julia's silk. This gentle diffusion of her presence is a less obtrusive rôle than satire has hitherto enjoyed but is none the less essential, and in any case it is all that can be allowed by a scientific, democratic society, too well informed to deal only with surfaces, too preoccupied with its own business and desires, such as they are, to worry much about the fiasco others make of theirs, too polite to scold even with wit, and too truly humorous to tolerate the superior pose.

In proportion however, as the individual is spared, the burden of responsibility is shifted to the collected shoulders of the society he has bound himself into. Logically, of course, the collection is no more guilty than its constituents, but it has the advantage of being quite as vulnerable and capable of improvement, and yet not endowed with personal feelings to be wounded or personal ability to retaliate.

So far as there is a definite Victorian contribution to the garner of satire, it lies in this democratization of objects and rationalization of methods. How great an impulse the Victorians gave to the era of agnosticism and revaluation of all ideals whose inception so troubled the waters of their reluctant souls, we never can know. What Shaw, Ibsen, Maeterlinck, Rostand, even Wells and Nietzsche, would have been without Peacock, Disraeli, Carlyle, Dickens, George Eliot, Huxley, Meredith, and Butler, is a question that admits of a wide solution. But it is assuredly as foolish to disdain the offerings of a past generation, however erring, ignorant, and prejudiced we may consider it in the light of our own emancipation

and advancement, as to suppose that we shall count for more than our due modicum in the centuries to come.

However that may be, we have as yet invented nothing to surpass the general Victorian satiric philosophy,—that the wisest reaction to life is a high seriousness graced with humor, and the most acceptable attitude toward one's fellow creatures is a compassionate comprehension of our common tragedy, redeemed from emotionalism by an ironic appreciation of the human comedy.

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Two especially noteworthy pieces of editorial Introduction should be mentioned: Garnett's for Peacock, and Mrs. Ritchie's for Thackeray. Among the many essays and shorter studies are the following:

Brontë, in Gates's *Studies and Appreciations;* and Swinburne's *A Note on Charlotte Brontë.*

Eliot, in Darmstetter's *English Studies*, Dowden's *Studies in Literature*, Morley's *Critical Miscellanies*, Myers' *Modern Essays*, and Sherer's *Essays on English Literature.*

Meredith, in Elton's *Modern Studies*, Henderson's *Interpreters of Life and the Modern Spirit*, and Sherman's *On Contemporary Literature.* Forman is editor of a volume *Some Early Appreciations of Meredith.*

Reade, in Swinburne's *Miscellanies.*

Trollope, in Bradford's *A Naturalist of Souls*, and Julian Hawthorne's *Confessions in Criticism.*

And finally there are certain combinations and groups, such as:

Brontë and Eliot, in Bonnell's *Charlotte Brontë, George Eliot, and Jane Austen.*

Brontë, Dickens, Eliot, Thackeray, and Trollope, in Saintsbury's *Corrected Impressions;* and Peacock, in his *Essays in English Literature.*

Brontë, Disraeli, Kingsley, and Eliot, in Stephen's *Hours in a Library;* and Trollope, in his *Studies of a Biographer.*

Dickens and Thackeray, in Bagehot's *Literary Studies*, and Field's *Yesterdays with Authors*.
Dickens, Thackeray, and Eliot, in Clark's *Study of English Prose Writers*.
Dickens, Thackeray, and Kingsley, in Lang's *Essays in Little*.
Dickens and Lytton, in Horne's *New Spirit of the Age*.
Dickens, in Hutton's *Criticism on Contemporary Thought and Thinkers*, and Eliot, in his *Essays on Some Modern Guides to English Thought*.
Dickens, Disraeli, Gaskell, and Meredith, in More's *Shelburne Essays*.
Disraeli and Peacock, in Garnett's *Essays of an ex-Librarian*.
Eliot, in Berle's *George Eliot and Thomas Hardy*.
Eliot and Trollope, in James's *Partial Portraits*.

The following editions of the novelists are those referred to in the text.

Brontë.

Jane Eyre. Haworth edition. Harper.
Shirley and *Villette*. Dent edition.

Butler.

Erewhon and *Erewhon Revisited*. Dutton.
The Way of All Flesh. *Modern Library* edition. Boni and Liveright.

Dickens.

Pickwick, Oliver Twist, Nicholas Nickleby, Martin Chuzzlewit, Hard Times, Little Dorrit, Tale of Two Cities, Our Mutual Friend. Hearst International edition.
Great Expectations, and *Edwin Drood*. The Jefferson Press.
Dombey and Son. Crowell.

Barnaby Rudge. Chapman and Hall.
Disraeli. Longmans, Green.

Eliot.
Middlemarch and *Mill on the Floss.* Blackwood.
All the others, Scribners' Standard edition.

Gaskell. Smith, Elder.

Kingsley. Macmillan.

Lytton. Knebworth edition. Routledge and Sons.

Meredith.
Sandra Belloni, Celt and Saxon, and *One of Our Conquerors:* Scribner.
All the others, Constable.

Peacock. Aldine edition. Dent.

Reade. Dana Estes.

Trollope.
Cathedral Series and *The Claverings:* Smith, Elder.
Manor House Series. Dodd, Mead.
The Bertrams. Harper.
The Way We Live Now. Chapman and Hall.

Thackeray. Dana Estes.

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